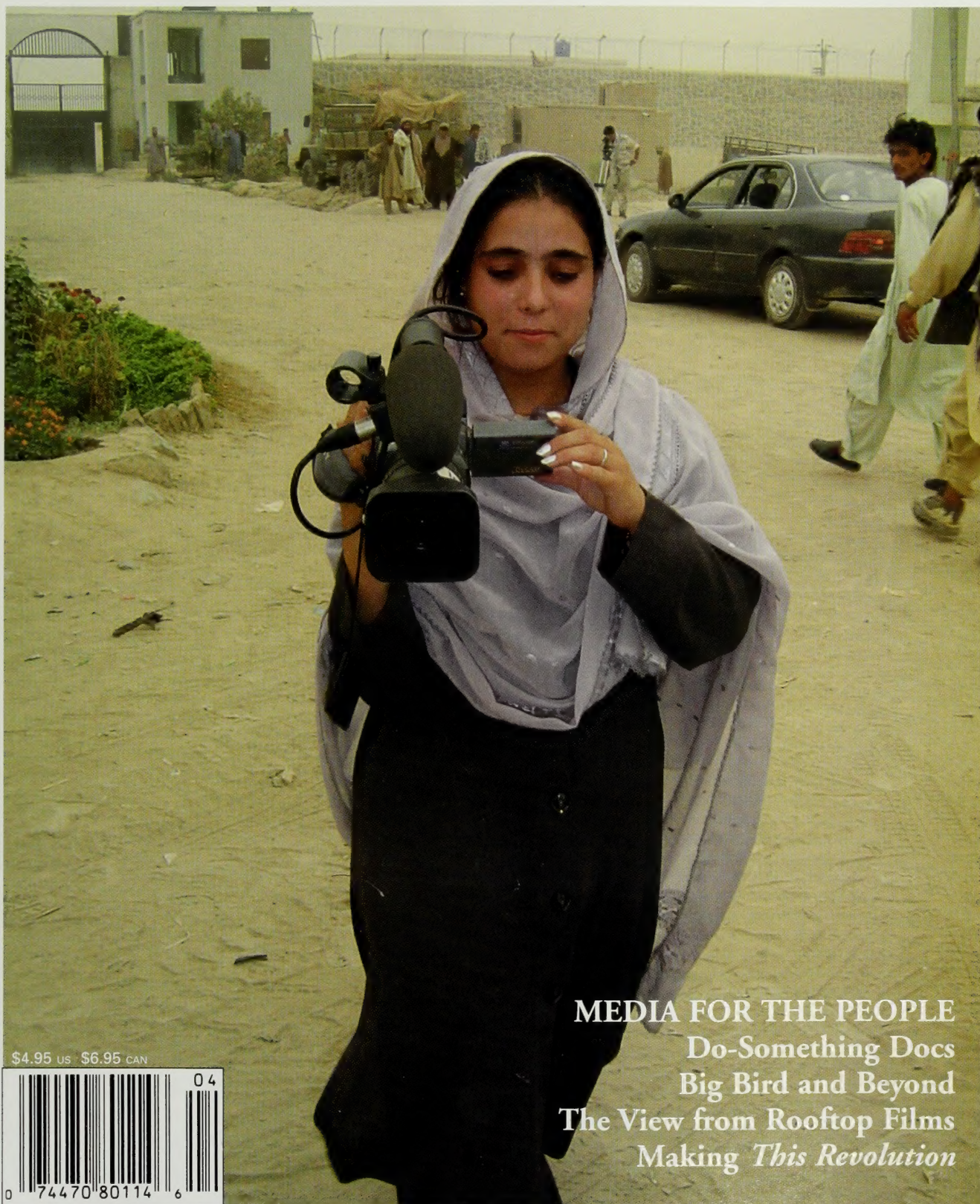


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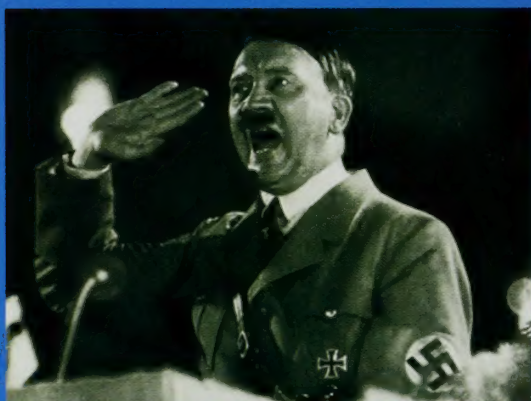
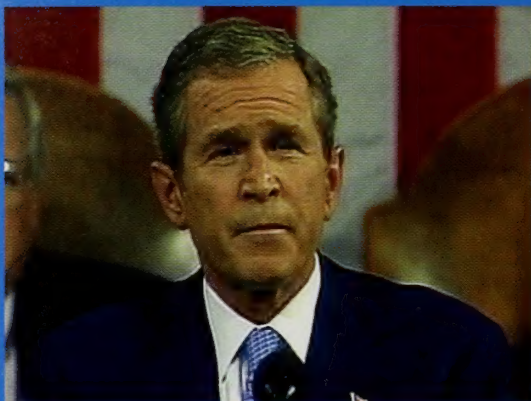
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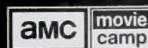
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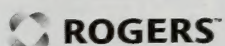
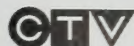
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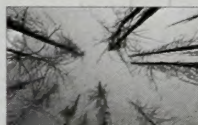


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Rebecca Carroll [Editor-in-Chief]

EDITOR'S LETTER

Dear Readers:

The thing about media outreach is that while you are ostensibly trying to reach outward, invariably you end up pulling inward—to check yourself. How far am I willing to go? What are my real intentions? And are all those folks I'm trying to reach really worth it in the long run? Best case scenario is... what? I change the world? Does that really ever happen? Does it, whatever it is, really just start with one person? Each one, teach one kind of thing? Is this going to help with my karma?

You're not alone—it's very human (and very smart) to check yourself when you're off doing good in the world. Altruism is not often suited to mere mortals. But if after you have checked yourself, and the news comes back that your intentions are sound—then carry on, and carry on a lot. We need you. And we need programs like Journeys in Film, founded by Joanne Ashe—a nonprofit organization that integrates foreign films into social studies, geography, and art classes. Doesn't that seem like a no-brainer? And yet, Ashe's is the first and only organization of its kind.

There is hope in public outreach and in trying to effect change and strengthen the collective character among your peers. That, I believe, was the original intent of PBS, which has both changed and stayed the same over the years. But even as articles are written (thoughtfully so, by Amy Albo, page 32), and questions are asked (of WNET vice president and director of programming, Tamara Robinson, page 21), I'm still not entirely sure what PBS is all about. And doesn't it also seem, in some

ways, too good to be true? Is it possible that a national broadcasting network can exist solely for the purpose of educating people in a not-always-boring way and sustain itself solely through private donations from rich people? In Albo's article, ITVS's Lois Vossen says of the widely viewed PBS "Independent Lens" series: "It's free to every American household and seen in a commercial-free environment. That is phenomenal in my opinion." And yes, it is, although somehow (and here visions of Barney and Elmo come to mind), it still feels commercial to me. It will be interesting to see the direction PBS takes (if a new direction is taken at all) after longtime PBS president Pat Mitchell steps down in 2006.

At the local level, despite the ever-present cache that comes with "independent filmmaking" in New York, the young men of Rooftop Films in Brooklyn show indie films up on a roof without attitude or pretense (page 36). Rooftop, which started out in 1997 as a nonprofit film festival and production collective that screened films with a 16mm projector and chairs borrowed from a furniture company, now receives up to 2,000 film submissions a year. And that's just for the festival arm of Rooftop. They also now provide production grants, education initiatives, and traveling programs.

Also in this issue: Lisa Selin Davis on documentaries that effect change, filmmaker Stephen Marshall on the making of his latest film, *This Revolution*, and policy columnist Matt Dunne on the reality of clearing copyrighted material.

Finally, we bid a sad farewell to Ossie Davis—the black king to Malcolm X's black prince, whom Davis so elegantly eulogized 40 years ago this past February. "Did you ever listen to him?" said Davis of Malcolm. "For if you did you would know him. And if you knew him you would know why we must honor him." Of Davis I say the same, with his deep and resonant voice forever fresh in my mind.

Enjoy, and thanks for reading
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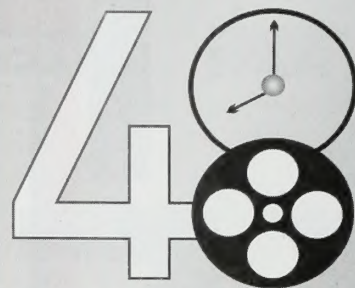


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Correction

We regret a mistake in the profile of Marcelo Zarvos in the December 2004 issue. Zarvos did not work as a piano player in the score for *The Sting*, but performed a piece from that score in his debut concert in Brazil. Also, he was 4 years old at the time, not 10.



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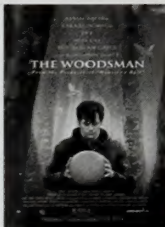
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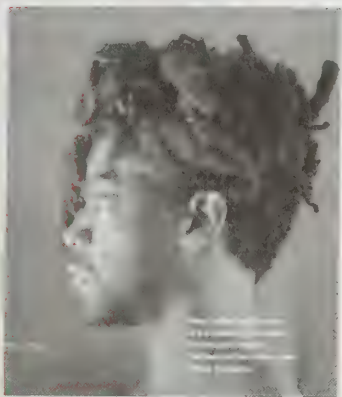


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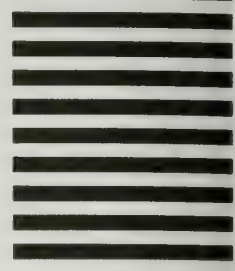
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NEWS

Eyes on the Prize

The cost of repeating history

By Rick Harrison



The original six-part series includes footage of Rosa Parks—here being fingerprinted by Deputy Sheriff D.H. Lackey on Feb. 22, 1956—who was among 100 people charged with violating segregation laws (AP Photo/Gene Herrick)

In 1955, African American Congressman Charles Diggs from Detroit arrived in Mississippi to attend the trial of the two men responsible for the racially-motivated murder of 15-year-old Emmett Till. Sheriff Clarence Strider and his deputies barred him from entering, and a black journalist tried to explain who Diggs was, only to be met by incredulity. “This nigger said there’s a nigger outside who says he’s a congressman,” one of the deputies said. To which another deputy replied, “A nigger congressman?”

Yes, this was a very different country.

Such scenes of history written with indelible images, sounds, and emotions comprise the 14 hours of the award-winning documentary *Eyes on the Prize*, the first six parts of which aired on PBS in 1987. They are scenes that to a young audience might feel as though they were crafted for a science fiction film or an episode of “The Twilight Zone.” But they are all too real and recently, all too in danger of vanishing from sight because of the expense of renewing copyrighted material.

Like so many documentary filmmakers, the producers at the Boston-based Blackside Inc., founded and led by Henry

Hampton, had limited funds to secure the rights to the heap of archival footage, photographs, and music that defined the Civil Rights Movement. Most of the clearances expired five years after the film first aired on PBS. The first six parts last aired in 1994, and the eight-part sequel, *Eyes on the Prize II: America at a Racial Crossroads* (1965-1985) aired in 1990. Henry Hampton died in 1998 before he could renew the rights.

Many of the songs sung in the film include new lyrics, requiring clearances for both the music and the lyricist—something not always easy to track down. According to Rena Kosersky, music researcher and rights coordinator for *Eyes on the Prize II*, to release the entire series today, some 180 songs need clearances.

“You cannot separate the movement from the songs,” Kosersky said. (Or separate the song from the movement in the case of “We Shall Overcome,” of which the writer’s royalties go to a civil rights education fund.) And if a license can’t be acquired because the song is in litigation, the owner can’t be found, or it’s too expensive? “We might have to take away that moment in history if we can’t change it,” she said.

The tape collections at many schools and libraries have suffered losses and deterioration over time. With no means to replace them, the film is like an endangered species, and one integral to the depth and vigor of the nation’s self-examination. So much so, that some people advocate the film’s distribution no matter what.

"This is analogous to stopping the circulation of all the books about Martin Luther King, stopping the circulation of all the books about Malcolm X, stopping the circulation of books about the founding of America," said Lawrence Guyot, former leader of the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party. "I would call upon everyone who has access to *Eyes on the Prize* to openly violate any and all laws regarding its showing."

Guyot joined an effort by Downhill Battle, a Massachusetts-based activist group that organized over 100 screenings in 28 states in February to publicize the film's plight and bring it once again to a mass audience.

The group originally had secured a digital copy of the film's first part for download on their website, but after lawyers representing Blackside contacted them to protest violation of their copyright, Downhill Battle removed the link. Although they clearly feel organizing the screenings falls well within the fair use provisions of copyright law.

"We don't believe that it's civil disobedience," said Nicholas Reville, co-director of

Downhill Battle. "We think it's pretty well covered by fair use. I think that people should be compensated for their work, but we need to be thinking about the public; some things are just so important that we need to make it available."

Sandy Forman, an attorney for Blackside, disagrees that Downhill Battle's efforts are helpful. "We appreciated that they're interested in people seeing this project, but the way they're going about it is not right and it's illegal," she said. "Even if their motivation is a good one, they can't do this."

Under a \$65,000 Ford Foundation grant, Forman, along with four one-time Blackside producers (the company now belongs to Hampton's two sisters and is inactive) are studying the technical and copyright issues facing the film with the hope of determining how much money will be needed to return the film to the public access and educational markets. Estimates at the time of this writing reach to about \$500,000.

"We're very optimistic that this will be

funded and back on the air next year," Forman said. And this time, she hopes all the rights can be granted in perpetuity.

"I don't want to do this again," she said with a sigh.

Some history is damn expensive to repeat.

The recent plight of Eyes on the Prize and similar historically significant films has spurred Sen. Mary L. Landrieu of Louisiana and Congressman John Lewis of Georgia to explore legislation that might ease public access.

The People's Studio

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land that was at one time the putrid pit of animal and chemical waste known as Collect Pond and then, when filled in around 1812, developed into the putrid pit of downtrodden humanity known as Five Points.

At 87 Lafayette St., the turrets and crested green copper roof of DCTV's headquarters makes the building look like a French chateau tucked inside modern-day Chinatown. But the bright red garage doors give away the building's origins as the home of Engine 31, residents there until a crack in the foundation forced them out in 1967.

Jon Alpert and Keiko Tsuno, two documentary filmmakers who had been teaching free video production workshops from their Canal Street loft since 1972, moved DCTV to their current location in 1979. The city declared the building to be a landmark in 1989. And just this January, DCTV partnered with Manhattan Neighborhood Network to renovate and install a new digital television production studio and control room.



MNN training with a community group, Neighborhood Economic Development Advocacy Project, at the DCTV studio in downtown Manhattan (MNN)

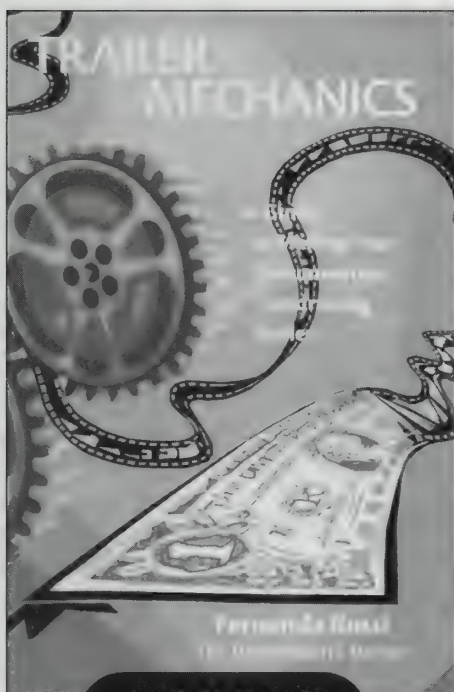
The studio features four remote cameras on the wood floor, one on the grid above and flexibility to plug in one or two handhelds. Producers can construct a set or use the exposed slate walls.

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tors, a new audio mixing board, controls for the robotic cameras, and a phone system that can allow for live call-ins simultaneously on all four MNN channels. Content can be recorded to DVCAM, and an engineer can pull content off the web and convert it to a TV signal.

Using some resources already at their disposal, the rebuild cost \$80,000 with another \$40,000 budgeted for this year. Jungers estimates that if they were to build the same studio from scratch it could cost around \$350,000.

"There are communities that make more with less, but we're right up there," Jungers said. "We're one of the flagship public access centers."

MNN offers more original programming than any other public access channel: between 14 and 18 hours a day, seven days a week, including over 800 shows. The new studio, its third in Manhattan, will be available to MNN for 20 hours a week, while DCTV's instructional programs PRO-TV (for at-risk inner city youth) and ConnecTV (for people with disabilities) will use the remaining time.

MNN trains about 35 people a

month in camera work, editing, and production—for free. The only requirement is to be a Manhattan resident, satisfying the station's goal to make television more accessible to the community, something Jungers distinguishes from the profit-oriented networks.

"When I see a network news van in my neighborhood, I get nervous," Jungers said. "Somebody died. The major media comes in

and basically strip-mines us. There is more to a neighborhood than mayhem and murder."

And though it might not literally save lives anymore, this firehouse can spread something other than water.

Bullets in Park City

Of all the success stories to arrive at this year's Sundance Film Festival in Park City, Utah, only one came exhibiting the emotional scars of so many



In early 2004, a friend of a teen in Brooklyn who was filming a documentary, was accidentally shot by a cop patrolling the area (DCTVNY)

bullet holes.

Terrence Fisher and Daniel Howard, two teens from Bedford Stuyvesant in New York City, won a Special Jury Award for Short Filmmakers for their short documentary *Bullets in the Hood: A Bed Stuy Story*, an examination of gun violence in their neighborhood that has killed 11 of their friends.

But no amount of hard lessons in the city's hard streets could prepare the filmmakers for the mountainous celebrity zoo that is Sundance.

"We went snowboarding," said Howard, 18, in a phone call from Claflin University in South Carolina where he's studying media and TV production. "You don't go snowboarding in the ghetto very often."

In January 2004, Fisher, 19, and Howard were filming their 22-minute doc, sponsored by PRO-TV, a program through New York's nonprofit media organization Downtown Community Television Center, when Fisher's friend Timothy Stansbury was accidentally shot to death by a city police officer at a rooftop doorway. Fisher was directly behind Stansbury, who fell back on him and sent them both tumbling down the stairs.

The already passionate film became an excruciating document of a neighborhood in turmoil, mourning yet another



Bullets in the Hood examines gun violence in Bedford Stuyvesant, Brooklyn (DCTVNY)

senseless death and railing for a sense of justice when apologies aren't enough. The film shows the family's reaction after a grand jury did not indict the police officer, exonerating him of any purposeful wrongdoing.

The emotions generated by this intimate portrait of helplessness, anger, fear, and pain translated even in Park City's upper altitudes and upper classes.

"When we showed it at Sundance, people told us they were gonna throw away their guns," Howard said. "People broke down crying. It was really heartwarming. We were bringing our environment out there."

Jasmine Chauca, 18, the film's editor, also attended the festival and recalled a pro-gun cab driver who told the filmmakers that there wouldn't be a gun problem in Brooklyn if people would just be more careful with them. Chuaca hoped the movie might change that impression.

"It opens up people to things they don't usually see and issues they don't usually think about," she said. "Just that we're opening people's eyes—that's the important part."

Howard, Fisher, Chauca, cinematographer/DP Michelle Watson, and their chaperones attended Sundance with the help of sponsors, watching a slew of new films and hobnobbing at exclusive parties, catching glimpses of folks like Ludacris and Snoop Dogg.

And while the experience was fun and eye-opening for this year's youngest filmmakers, they are focused on the message and their futures.

"We're just trying to show people the horrors of gun violence," Howard said. "If I'm young enough to get my film into Sundance, I'm also young enough to die on the street."

In Memory: Dirk Koning

We wish to mourn the death of Dirk Koning, whose amazing vision energized the community media and tech fields. He died on February 10, the result of a heart procedure gone wrong. Dirk Koning was the founding director of the Community Media Center in Grand Rapids, Michigan in 1981. The CMC is a national model for integrated radio, television, and internet applications for community development. Koning edited the national magazine, *Community Media Review* and was president of the Washington D.C.-based Alliance for Communications Democracy. He consulted on facilities design, wireless networks, and fund development. He also wrote and spoke internationally on social applications of information technology. ★

Dirk Koning: A Life Beautifully Lived:
<http://dirkkoning.blogspot.com>

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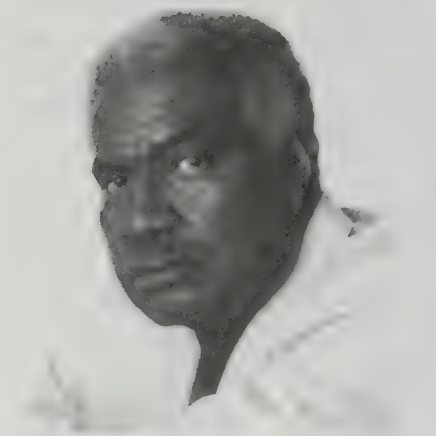
In Memoriam: Ossie Davis

By Douglas Singleton

Ossie Davis died February 4 at age 87, after over half a century of making films. He was a revered stage and film actor, writer, producer, and director, but foremost, along with his lifelong companion and wife Ruby Dee, a relentless social activist.

In 1976, Davis and Dee were approached by a very ambitious Delta Sigma Theta sorority, the largest African American women's organization in the United States, to make an independent feature film. Amidst the era's slew of "blaxploitation" films, the organization wanted to finance a movie reflecting their concern for moral and social values rather than what they felt were the typical negative African American cultural chronicles of the day. And so they hunted down the couple, whose decades of experience in the film industry and history of social activism made them obvious choices for such a project. The result was *Countdown at Kusini* (1976), a thriller set in a mythical African nation that dramatized the need for solidarity amongst people of color across the globe. The film is noteworthy as the first American feature filmed entirely by an African American crew, financed by a private black organization. In an interview in S. Torriano and Venise Berry's *The 50 Most Influential Black Films*, Davis said of *Kusini*, "the most important thing about the venture is the questions it poses and the lessons it teaches."

The oldest of five children, Ossie Davis was born Raiford Chatman Davis in Cogdell, Georgia on December 18, 1917. A county clerk misunderstood his mother's articulation of his initials "R.C." for "Ossie"—and the name stuck. The young Davis attended Howard University, studying English, but soon moved to New York City and joined Harlem's Rose McClendon Players. His Broadway debut was in the 1946 drama *Jeb*, playing the lead, a soldier returning from World War II doing battle with the Ku Klux Klan. It was one of many instances in which Davis chose roles of a



complex nature rather than the usual stereotypes offered African American actors at the time. It was in this production that he met Ruby Dee, also making her Broadway debut. Though *Jeb* lasted only nine performances it produced a lifelong union—the pair were married in 1948 and had three children, actor Guy Davis, Nora, and Hasna. Davis made his movie debut in the 1950 examination of racism, *No Way Out*, also the debut of star Sidney Poitier. In their joint autobiography, *With Ossie and Ruby: In This Life Together*, the couple recalled lives immersed in New York City's artistic community, years of activism in the civil rights struggle, and vigorous opposition to Sen. Joseph McCarthy's Communist witch hunt.

Ossie and Ruby helped organize the 1963 civil rights March on Washington, serving as MCs of the event. Davis delivered the eulogy at Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s funeral in 1968, as he had done so memorably at the funeral of Malcolm X in 1965: "Consigning these mortal remains to earth, the common mother of all, secure in the knowledge that what we place in the ground is no more now a man but a seed which, after the winter of our discontent, will come forth again to meet us."

Davis was one of the first African American film directors of the modern era, directing the adaptation of Chester Himes's detective drama *Cotton Comes to Harlem* in 1970 and *Kusini* in 1976. He penned his first movie in 1963, *Gone Are The Days!*, which was an adaptation of his Broadway play *Purlie Victorious*, in which

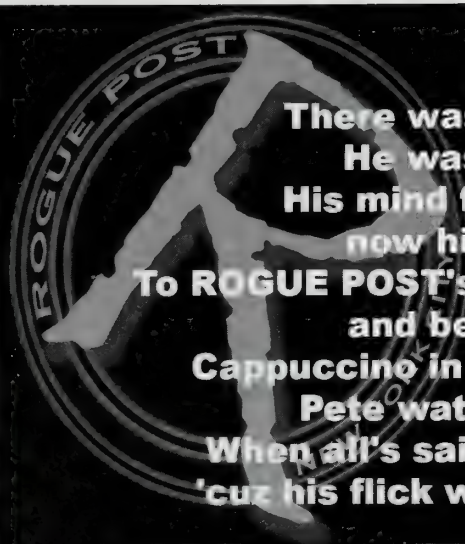
he starred with his wife. He continued to act on the stage after he had launched a screen career, performing in the stage version of *A Raisin In The Sun* in 1959, and the successful run of *I'm Not Rappaport* in 1986. Davis was inducted into the Theater Hall of Fame in 1994.

He was the recipient of dozens of awards during his lifetime, including the NAACP Image Award in 1989, the US National Medal for the Arts in 1995, and, along with his wife, the Kennedy Center Honors in 2004. The book he wrote about the young Frederick Douglass, *Escape To Freedom*, was honored by the American Library Association and received the Jane Addams Children's Book Award.

Later in life, Davis became known for his work with director Spike Lee in *Do the Right Thing* (1989), *Jungle Fever* (1991), and *Get On the Bus* (1996), and reread parts of his Malcolm X eulogy at the close of Lee's *Malcolm X* (1992). A champion of independent film throughout his life, one of Davis's last films was the outrageous 2002 B-movie, *Bubba Ho-Tep*, in which he played an African American man in a retirement home with a very undead Elvis who claims to actually be John F. Kennedy (something to do with the FBI and implanted "skin grafts").

Countdown at Kusini was yanked from theaters by distributors before it ever had a chance to have the effect Davis and the Delta sorority wanted. It lost money and nearly ruined the tenures of the sorority's leadership. But Davis nevertheless felt it was a historic venture because of the example it set as creative social activism. Unseen by anyone since its 1976 run of a few days, and seemingly lost to the annals of history, Davis hoped that someday the film would be rediscovered and given the due it was never allowed in its time.

This spirit of dogged artistic resolve and social awareness characterized a life that stands as an example to all those aspiring to socially relevant art. He will be dearly, dearly missed. ★



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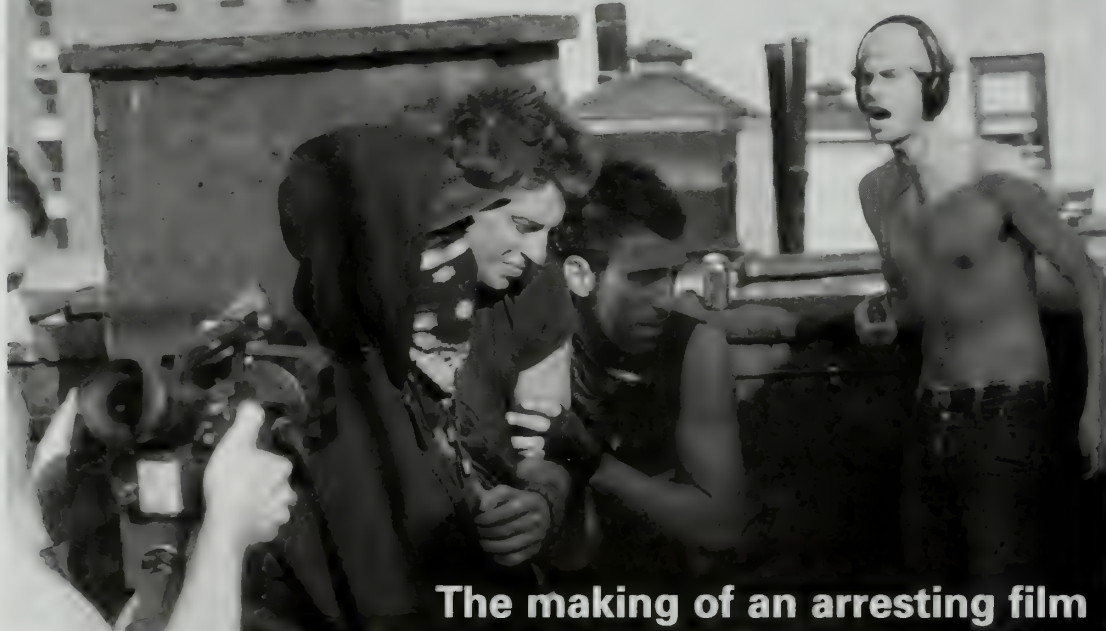
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This REVOLUTION



The making of an arresting film

Stephen Marshall (right) yells orders during a fight on the roof
(photo courtesy Stephen Marshall)

By Stephen Marshall

In June 2004, I watched Ted Demme's inspirational profile of 70s filmmakers, *A Decade Under the Influence*, which is basically a call-to-arms for indie auteurs to use whatever means they have at their disposal to make movies. Afterward, I just started riffing with a producer friend, Bob Jason, on how the time was ripe for a radically politicized homage to the Cassavetes era. Jason agreed, so I went full force and pitched him and his production company Co.Op, the concept of an updated homage to Haskell Wexler's cinema verité classic, *Medium Cool*. Set against the chaotic and hyper-militarized backdrop of the 1968 Democratic National Convention, Wexler's narrative effectively blurred the lines between reality and fiction, forcing viewers to question the responsibility media has to its audience and the society as a whole. For many American cinephiles, it is one of the most important films to emerge from that era.

With the Republican National Convention coming to New York in less than 90 days, Jason cautioned that we'd

probably have to shoot the narrative elements after the protesters left the city. But I argued we would need the tension and drama of the approaching convention to get the most out of our actors—especially if we wanted to set the third act in the streets of Manhattan during the protests. Jason brought in his partner Bob Kravitz to vet the idea. Kravitz was skeptical, but he could see the value of a run-and-gun shoot that stole production values from what would potentially be the largest gathering of activists since the Vietnam War. "Get us a script that can attract some major talent, and we'll set you up for a mid-August shoot," he said.

In three days I had a 10-page treatment. Two weeks later there was a first draft. Co.Op threw down the money for development, and I began working with Nathan Crooker, a young director and cinematographer who had just finished directing a series of commercials at the company. Despite the fact that Crooker had no feature-level acting experience, my gut instinct was to cast him in the lead role of Jake Cassavetes, the hot-

blooded war shooter who returns from Iraq and is assigned by the network to get embedded with radical elements of the American political underground. I knew we would need to depend on Jake's RNC footage as much as our camera crew's, and so the actor needed to be able to shoot as well as any real cameraman.

Once the third draft was completed, we sent it to Adrienne Stern to cast, and Crooker and I took off to Boston for the Democratic National Convention to shoot the opening credit sequence and do tests to see if Crooker could carry the part.

When we got to Boston, we found a fortress city. The streets around the Convention Center were fenced off and surrounded by police officers, secret service agents, snipers, and heavily armed state troopers. Crooker and I spent four days embedded with the various anarchist collectives protesting the DNC, shooting footage from both Jake's and the narrative (third person) cameras. The opening scene of the film is shot from Jake's POV as he repeatedly asks a masked anarchist why they cover their faces. With each suc-

cessive question, the protester gets more annoyed, until he finally grabs Jake's camera and, looking directly into the lens, says "I know who you are, I know what you are doing, and I am going to smash your shit to the ground."

Charles Maol is a dedicated activist whom I have known for many years. He agreed to act as the film's protest coordinator at both the conventions as well as playing the part of this angry anarchist in the opening scene. But each time Crooker approached Maol with his camera to elicit the angered response, other activists in the crowd mistook it for a true confrontation and had to be restrained from attacking Crooker. This added an incredibly hot layer of tension to the scene, which we eventually pulled off on the third take.

On the final day of the convention, just hours before the delegates would leave the city, a fight broke out between protesters and the Boston police. It came after a rash of arrests in the so-called "free speech pen" outside the Convention Center. The protesters began to link arms and surround a small unit of police officers. When the police began to push back, one kid grabbed the hat off a cop's head and the melee began. From the edge of the struggle, I kept my camera locked on Crooker, who had positioned himself directly in the middle of the fight. Despite being repeatedly hit with billy clubs, he stuck with the action and shot what would become the action-packed opening credit sequence for *This Revolution*.

Back in New York, with three weeks left before the proposed commencement of principal photography, we began to cast roles. Though we would be producing the film on a shoestring budget, there was a lot of pressure to attract some name talent—especially if I wanted to give the lead role of Jake Cassavetes to Nathan Crooker. In less than two weeks we cast a majority of the parts, giving leads to Rosario Dawson, Amy Redford, and Brendan Sexton III. We also nailed down over 40 locations, many of which were attained at no cost.

The basic story of *This Revolution* follows Jake's journey from the corporatist realm of news media into a more radicalized and underground political environ-


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DP Brian Jackson and camera crew after the arrest (photo courtesy of Stephen Marshall)

ment when he discovers the network is giving his footage of anarchists to The Department of Homeland Security, Jake is forced to take sides and decide whether he should risk his social and financial security in order to take revenge against the system that has betrayed him. His moment of personal revolution is inspired by that of Rosario Dawson's character, Tina, who has chosen the radical anarchist Black Bloc movement as a means of channeling her rage at the government for taking her husband to his death in Iraq.

The majority of the shoot took place in Manhattan's Lower East Side. During one very hectic day of shooting, Rosario remarked that we were moving at about four times the speed of a "normal" film schedule. Over a two-week period, we shot 12 days at an average of 18 hours a day. Because of the compressed schedule and pressure to move between locations, the actors often only had one or two takes to get a scene.

Each morning, as the RNC

approached, headlines in the New York papers grew ever more shrill and ominous. Threats of terrorist bombings and anarchist attacks on the city added a dimension of realism to the fictional construct that had been set against the imminent convention. On the first day of the RNC, we brought in Rosario, the four members of her Black Bloc "cell," and the rest of the crew to be briefed by Charles Maol. Though we had been given loose permits to shoot scenes of the Bloc in the actual protests, there was no guarantee that we could avoid tear gas, mass arrests, or even a potential Al Qaeda hit. So the group wrote the numbers of our lawyers on their forearms and equipped themselves with gas masks in case of an attack.

The most critical scene for us to shoot that day involved a chase sequence between Jake, the Black Bloc, and undercover police officers dressed as protesters. We had to find a street that was not too hotly lit but which also had enough protest action to give a realistic backdrop to the scene. Adding to the circus-like



Nathan Crooker and Rosario Dawson review footage (photo courtesy of Stephen Marshall)

atmosphere of the shoot were crews from "Entertainment Tonight" and the *New York Daily News*, who had asked to tag along for the day. Try to imagine the scene: television crews following and shooting our crew who were following and shooting Jake who was following and shooting the fictional Black Bloc activists.

As we made our way down one street toward the main march, we heard sirens and then saw a police van pull up on the sidewalk ahead of us. Seconds later, with all cameras rolling, six NYPD officers had surrounded the Black Bloc actors and pushed Rosario Dawson and Vija Brigita Gros galvis onto the hood of a car. When they started to cuff them, Rosario protested and tried to pull her mask down to explain the situation. The officer slammed her back onto the car hood and placed steel handcuffs on her wrists. One woman who witnessed the entire scene broke into tears and began sobbing uncontrollably.

Over the next five minutes, with our

entire crew, the news media and hundreds of onlookers milling around, I tried to present our permits to the arresting officer. Each time, he refused to look at the paper and pushed me back onto the sidewalk. Finally, as it became clear that Rosario and Vija were going to be arrested for breaking the city's prohibition on wearing masks at protests, I demanded he look at the documents. With that, I was arrested for obstruction of justice and hauled into the back of the van with Rosario and Vija, both of whom had been unable to pull the black bandanas from their faces.

During the next four hours, we were shuttled from the local precinct to the makeshift detention center at Pier 57. Separated by 15-foot-high fences rimmed with barbed wire, we waited for our files to be processed so we could be taken down to central booking. We were some of the first people to be arrested that day—eventually thousands more innocent, law-abiding citizens would pass through the facility—so we were handled relatively quickly. When I finally got into the cell downtown, I was able to call Lisa Hsu, the film's producer. She explained that Brian Jackson, the film's brilliant DP, was out with the rest of the cast and

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Jake shooting in Times Square
(photo courtesy of Stephen Marshall)

crew shooting as much of the third act as he could. Realizing that we would not be able to take Rosario back out into the protests after this fiasco, Lisa and I sat on the phone for an hour, re-writing the climax of the film. She had already seen footage of the arrest shot by Brian at the scene and felt it would be perfect for the film. It had given us a high-production value climax that we could never have planned for and created a more powerful consequence of the network's betrayal of Jake to Homeland Security, specifically the identification and arrest of Tina.

That event changed the entire course of the film and ultimately became a pivotal moment in the story, providing us with a perfect alchemy of the documentary and narrative genres. Once principal photography was wrapped, we rushed into the edit and had our cut ready for the Sundance deadline (a week late, actually), completing the entire process, from conception to final cut, in 100 days.

Though there were many compromises due to the speed and approach I took to the production, the main intention of making a film that quickly was in having a relevant social document that could reflect the social upheaval of our current era. So often this is left to the documentary genre, and we lose the more beautiful, tragic, and heroic elements that can be sheathed in a narrative structure. I hope that *This Revolution* can contribute to the legacy of vérité filmmaking and honor the tradition established by artists like John Cassavetes and Haskell Wexler. ★



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Q/A

Tamara E. Robinson

VICE PRESIDENT
AND DIRECTOR OF
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NEW YORK

By Rebecca Carroll

Rebecca Carroll: Where are we with public television? What do people—both those who are watching and not watching—need to know about public television now that's different from 10 years ago?

Tamara E. Robinson: Perhaps the most important thing to underscore is something often taken for granted: Public television is free of charge, and available to all. We're a full-time provider of quality programming to a very diverse, very demanding population. We're also one of the country's most powerful and cost-effective educational forces. That hasn't changed. But the broadcast landscape has—dramatically.

Ten years ago, there were three major

networks, public television, and a handful of cable alternatives. We're now operating in a 500-channel universe, which means confronting and overcoming numerous challenges. We're more vulnerable than ever to the vicissitudes of the economy. Funding is a full-time effort. We're also working hard every day to take advantage of the latest technologies the market has to offer. Today, Thirteen/WNET is expanding its service through a range of pioneering efforts—including its merger with its sister-station, WLIW21, and the inauguration of new digital and Video On Demand channels. In the end, it's all about better television.

RC: What are some of the biggest

misconceptions about public TV?

TR: That public television is stodgy, old fashioned, hard to watch, not timely, not relevant, has no humor and is for women over 55. The reality could not be more different. Our viewers reflect our programs—they're interesting, they're curious, they're diverse.

RC: What kind of cross-pollination occurs between public television and independent film?

TR: There has always been cross-pollination between public television and independent film, and Thirteen/WNET continues to be a leader in this area. Thirteen/WNET was one of the first—if not the first—to provide a regular forum



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for independent film and producers, starting from the TV Lab, to becoming a founding partner of American Documentary Fund, which gave birth to P.O.V. Our portfolio includes: "Reel NY," "Cantos Latinos," "Due East," "Umoja!," and "Out!." As well as a plethora of programming provided by independents as a part of our ongoing strands: "Great Performances," "American Masters," "Nature," "Wide Angle," and virtually all of our limited series, such as the recent *Slavery and the Making of America*, which the *New York Daily News* called "the most powerful and important television work on the subject since 'Roots' in 1977."

It's worth noting that series producer Dante J. James is an independent filmmaker currently pursuing a master's degree at Duke University while developing new projects. Mr. James also produced the Emmy-nominated *Marian Anderson and Politics: The New Black Power*, chosen by *The New York Times* as one of the best documentaries of 1990. We're proud of our association with independents like Mr. James.

RC: And what are the differences between the two? I think some people feel as though public television is this sort of "other" entity, and because independent film has this hip cache, never the twain shall meet kind of thing. Your thoughts?

TR: Most of the work on public television is produced by a diverse slate of independents, many of which have received the highest honors television has to offer. Public television, especially Thirteen/WNET, has always been fueled by the independent creative spirit, which we've nurtured since day one as the presenting station for such now famous documentarians as Frederick Wiseman, Ken

Burns, Ric Burns, Alan and Susan Raymond, Anne Makepeace, Sam Pollard, Mustapha Khan, Nam June Paik, and a host of others.

RC: What is WNET's position on commercial advertising? Both as a station model and as a station that needs to maintain and grow itself?

TR: It's simple: We do not take commercial advertising. We are a private, nonprofit corporation. As such, Thirteen members remain our most reliable source of financial support. This keeps us unencumbered and beholden to no one and helps us provide a positive, non-cluttered environment for our viewers. At the same time, dedicated philanthropic organizations and private corporations have long been a vital source of general operating support for Thirteen.

RC: How can independent filmmakers get involved with public television?

TR: Independents are an integral part of Thirteen and we are always in the market for challenging ideas and new proposals from a fresh pool of creative talent. Anyone can pitch ideas to any public television station like Thirteen, which accepts treatments, full-length proposals, and completed programs for evaluation. Or, filmmakers can send in a letter of inquiry to see if there is possible interest before sending in full-length materials.

RC: Are you constantly aware of the moral high ground public television represents? Or is assigned? And is it fairly assigned as such?

TR: Our mission statement is pretty clear: "Through its productions, broadcasts, and educational outreach activities, Thirteen/WNET New York pursues a single, overarching goal: to create television and interactive media experiences of

lasting significance for all segments of the population—in the New York metropolitan area, across America, and worldwide.” We are very mindful of this and would never to anything to jeopardize the public’s trust.

RC: What are some of the programming choices that you would never make for WNET? And why?

TR: We would never produce programming that would intentionally mislead or provide false information to the viewer. We take very seriously our duties as broadcaster, educator, and benefactor. Programs like “NOW With David Brancaccio” and “*The Wall Street Journal Report*” offer viewers forums for exploring, understanding, and debating the most important issues of the day.

RC: Who are the forgotten heroes of public television? Of public television as a concept, a medium, an art form, and as something to be protected and revered?

TR: Hartford Gunn, first president of PBS, who set the vision; Samuel C.O. Holt, first head of programming, who set the standard for quality and intelligent programming; Robert A. Mott, first head of station relations for PBS, who understood what a membership means, how it works and how a national organization needs to be accountable; and John Macy, first head of the Corporation for Public Broadcasting. These people and countless others understood that the “S” in PBS really did mean service and each day they demonstrated that in every aspect of their work. Now, it’s our responsibility to carry those principles forward, to continue asking the big questions, and to rededicate ourselves to the longstanding tradition of making uncommonly fine TV. ★

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Journeys in Film: A Children's Program

Foreign films foster awareness and tolerance

By Derek Loosvelt

Inside Manhattan's City Hall Academy on a dark and wet Friday morning this past February, actor Liam Neeson introduced some 35 New York City public school teachers to Journeys in Film, a nonprofit educational program using feature-length foreign films such as *Whale Rider*, *Bend it Like Beckham*, and *The Cup* as a springboard to instill cultural awareness and tolerance among middle school students. Neeson, national spokesman for Journeys, stressed the importance of creating global citizens and said he was honored to be in a room full of teachers, explaining that he comes from a family of teachers himself and highly respects the profession. Neeson ended his brief introduction by telling the teachers their work is vital to the long-term well being of the United States. "For the next generation," he said, "knowledge of the world is no longer a luxury, it's a necessity."

Neeson's appearance was followed by a Journeys in Film workshop—a professional development seminar for teachers sponsored by the New York City Board of Education—that included sample lesson plans and a screening of *Children of Heaven*, another film used in Journeys curriculum.

Journeys, which was officially unveiled to more than 4,500 students in seven cities in 2004 and could reach as many as 50,000 students in the 2005-2006 school year, is the creation of Joanne Ashe, whose background certainly informs the program. The daughter of Polish immigrants, Ashe grew up in the late 1950s and 1960s in Beverly, Massachusetts, among families of numerous ethnicities.



James McDaniel and The Lady Warriors in *Edge of America*, slated for next year (Fred Hayes/Showtime)

She holds a master's degree in humanistic education and has curated art exhibits on racism as well as children's mental health issues. She's also the mother of two daughters and an adopted son, who is originally from Siberia. That experience prompted Ashe to work for an international adoption agency and, later, to co-produce *The Waiting Children*, a short documentary taking viewers inside Russian orphanages that appeared at the 1998 Sundance Film Festival.

Ashe, who serves as Journeys executive director, says the idea to teach children through film came to her during the 2001 Palm Springs International Film Festival, held a few months after 9/11. At the festival, Ashe saw nine films, two of which, she says, "stood out and got me thinking." One, *Abandoned* (2001), written and directed by Hungarian-born Árpád Sopsits, follows a young boy thrown into an orphanage even though his parents are still alive. The second, *Baran* (2001), written and directed by Iranian filmmaker Majid Majidi, focuses on an unlikely relationship in Tehran between a 17-year-old Kurdish worker

and a young Afghan with a secret. "After that film," Ashe says, "while the credits were still rolling, I came up with the idea."

Originally, Ashe thought the project, which today involves in-class screenings as well as pre- and post-screening discussions and related lessons and assignments, would be geared towards high school students and focus on human rights issues. "In order to reach the masses," she says, "I knew early on I had to take the project to schools, rather than theaters." She also figured kids wouldn't care as much about a human rights issue unless they were familiar with the culture in which it was based. So she thought to take the program to middle schools and center it on connecting to characters and story, which she hoped would lead to cultural understanding. Ashe then decided to combine the program with geography, history, and social studies lessons. "It was a way to get into schools," she says. "It couldn't be arts-based, because arts funding was being cut."

While the idea began to grow, Ashe met Neeson in a bar in New York. Two of

her daughter's friends were appearing with him in a Broadway production of *The Crucible*, and at an after-party, Ashe was introduced to the actor and thanked him for his moving portrayal of Oskar Schindler in *Schindler's List*. Ashe's parents are Holocaust survivors, and her father worked in Schindler's factory. "That film validated my parents' lives," Ashe says. "Until then, survivors had largely been forgotten." After Ashe told Neeson all this, he said, "God bless you. And God bless your father. Tell me about him."

She did, and then told Neeson about her idea for Journeys. "I just let it out," she says, "and right away he said, 'How can help you?'" On the spot, Ashe asked Neeson if he'd be her national spokesperson, and he agreed. "It was still an idea then," she says, "but that got me focused."

The first Journeys screening occurred in 2003 in Albuquerque, New Mexico, at a theater not far from where Ashe lives and bases Journeys. (For logistical reasons, screenings are now held in classrooms.) About 250 kids from five schools watched *The Cup* (1999), a film about two young Tibetan refugees who, along with several teenage monks, are transformed during the broadcast of soccer's World Cup. Ashe hoped the kids watching would be transformed, too.

The outcome didn't disappoint. "At the end of the film the kids were clapping," Ashe says. "And during the Q&A, they were jumping out of their seats to ask questions." Before the film rolled, kids were asked to look out for stereotyping, various cultural objects, and the different ways in which food is prepared and people greet each other—all of which is standard procedure in Journeys' lesson plans. Kids were also asked what they'd think if they were to meet a Tibetan boy who wore an orange robe with a sash. "Most thought it would be 'weird,'" says Ashe. "But after the film, when we asked

them the same question, they said it would be 'cool.' It went from weird to cool. And that was our data." Additional data came a few weeks later when Ashe heard that many kids had asked their teachers if a Tibetan exchange student could come to their school.

In 2003 and 2004, while searching for other middle school-appropriate films with which to rollout the project on a wider scale, Ashe focused on creating alliances and landing funding. As a result, she discovered Building Bridges: A Peace Corps Classroom Guide to Cross-Cultural Understanding, an online resource that teaches students about the universal aspects of culture and the ways in which it influences behavior. Ashe thought Building Bridges would complement Journeys and today, the curriculum



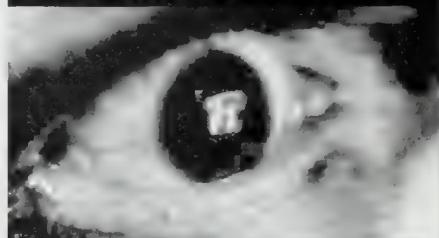
Whale Rider is one of the films that Journeys uses to instill cultural awareness in kids (South Pacific Pictures)

includes it. The Peace Corps' Donna Molinari, who works alongside Ashe, praises the program. "I know of no other organization that approaches cross-cultural understanding in such a meaningful and effective way," she says of Journeys. "Films are meticulously screened for content as well as screenwriting quality, and students are drawn in by seeing their own likeness on screen—but in a far away place."

Ashe also formed an advisory board, which includes actor, director, and writer Harold Ramis; Alan Dershowitz, a prominent law professor at Harvard University; and Henry Louis Gates, Jr., a

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Seung-Ho Yoo (foreground) and Eul-Boon Kim star in Jeong-Hyang Lee's film *The Way Home*, which will be part of the 2005 Journeys in Film curriculum (Mi-Jin Han/Paramount Classics)

professor and chair of The African and African American Studies Department, also at Harvard. Ashe says, "I wanted to get the blessing of the film industry and the heavy hitters in the academic world and connect them together." Ramis, a Chicago resident and friend of Ashe's prior to joining the Journeys board, connected her with the CEO of Chicago Public Schools Arne Duncan, who was instrumental in bringing Journeys to his city.

As for funding, actress Shirley MacLaine, the former chairperson of the New Mexico Film Office's Film Advisory Board, heard about Journeys, loved the idea, and took it to an anonymous Hollywood philanthropist who wrote Ashe a generous check. Soon after, Ashe hired cross-cultural communications specialist Anna Mara Rutins and filmmaker Ethan Silverman to help out. Silverman, who wrote and directed *The Waiting Children* (the film Ashe co-produced), writes Journeys's lesson plans specific to teaching film as literature. "For example," Ashe says, "with *Children in Heaven*, we show students how to look at the structure of the film through a pair of shoes. We also teach them what to look for in a film, such as the use of different camera angles, and about perspective in film." Ashe explains that the lesson plan for *The Cup* includes asking kids what monks playing soccer with a coke can

says about the West's influence on the Tibetan culture. "So kids are also learning about their own culture too," she says.

In September 2004, Journeys's pilot program began in Chicago, Tulsa, Seattle, Los Angeles, Albuquerque, Toronto, and New York. Support has come from production companies such as DreamWorks and Miramax, which donated DVDs of its films to be used in classrooms, as well as from corporate sponsors, including Continental Airlines, Liberty Group Publishing, and Ameritest. So far, Ashe says Journeys hasn't run into any major obstacles, and teachers couldn't be more pleased.

"The opportunity to invite students to look at a problem from the viewpoint of another culture is remarkable," says Georgia Piechpander, a teacher in Chicago. Students at her school were "spellbound with *The Cup*," she says. "They laughed in all the right spots and really related to the little 'wheeler-and-dealer' character." She adds that the subtitles kept students engaged throughout, rather than turn them off, and many kids expressed an interest in the Dalai Lama, so some classes did extra research.

Meg Venckus, another Chicago teacher, recently showed her students *Children of Heaven* (which, like *Baran*, one of Ashe's inspirations for Journeys, was written and directed by Majid

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Majidi). "A few kids actually cried when Ali told Zohre he'd lost her shoes," says Venckus, who adds that as a result of the film, her students "gained a better feel for the land, customs, and people of Iran than any chapter unit could ever provide."

Bradley Goodman, who teaches fifth and sixth graders at New York's East Village Community School, has held viewings of both *The Cup* and *Children of Heaven*. "The kids enjoyed *The Cup*," he says, "but they loved, and were very moved by *Children of Heaven*. They were amazed at how important an old and very un-cool pair of shoes were to the kids in the film." Goodman explains that his students often obsess over their expensive sneakers and says they were also surprised that the Iranian family in the film had such a beautiful house with a courtyard and fountain, even though they were clearly poor. "It's just fascinating to see them making connections and realizing the differences in priorities in other cultures," Goodman says. "Although my students live in New York, their own worlds are actually rather small. Watching and discussing films from other countries and cultures has been enlightening for them, priming them to think on a global level." Goodman partially attributes the Journeys curriculum for inspiring his students to initiate an in-class project that involves raising money for a school in Sudan.

Along with affecting participating students, Journeys has provided an additional outlet for filmmakers. Ashe says several filmmakers have asked her to look at their films, and one, Iranian filmmaker Bahman Ghobadi, expressed hopes that Ashe would bring Journeys to Iraqi school children. Ashe, in turn, would like to use one of Ghobadi's films, *Turtles Can Fly* (2004), as part of Journeys' cur-

riculum. But due to its mature subject matter—the film focuses on two Kurdish teenagers living in a refugee camp in Iraq near the Turkish border on the eve of the American invasion—she admits it would have to be included in a future series for high school, not middle school students.



(L-R) Journeys founder Joanne Ashe, director of City Hall Academy Anna Commitante, spokesman/actor Liam Neeson, and Donna Molinari of US Peace Corps World Wise Schools (Dunkelman Mollin)

"Eventually, we would like to have a series on films with strong messages that bring issues to the forefront," she says, echoing her original idea for the program. "Journeys was developed to teach kids about other cultures, rather than issues, but that will come." ★

More information is available at www.journeysinfilm.org



Neeson speaking at the workshop at the City Hall Academy (Dunkelman Mollin)

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THE DOCUMENTARY DOCTOR



Fernanda Rossi

Dear Doc Doctor:

My film projects and ideas are well-suited for public television. But as an independent filmmaker I can't envision my work fitting into pre-formatted programs. Do I have any options besides just selling a finished film?

To work for or work with—to give up creative control for the safety of a check, or brave financial storms and sell the film when it's finished. With LInCs (Local Independents Collaborating with Stations), a funding initiative from ITVS, you can have your cake and eat it too. (And with 346 stations nationwide, there is a lot of cake to choose from.) LInCS offers matching funds—you bring the idea or work-in-progress and the local station of your choice offers in-kind services, such as equipment, publicity, or any number of things you might need.

The first step is to identify the aspects of your project or idea that might appeal to a specific region of the country. Visit www.pbs.org/stationfinder and enter a state or zip code, which will direct you to the websites of PBS affiliate stations where you can learn more about their programming and interests. Even if the station is not directly affected by the topic of your film, they might be supportive of the cause. So don't give up

too easily, and don't limit your search to the obvious geographical matches. Then you can start calling stations to evaluate if there is potential and interest in a mutually beneficial partnership. Tips on how to approach a station and build partnerships can be found at www.itvs.org/producers/funding.html.

Elizabeth Meyer, programming manager for the LInCS and special projects at ITVS presents this partnership as the ideal win-win situation: "We want to see independent filmmakers bring their unique vision into the PBS world, while at the same time helping local PBS stations fulfill their mission." That means your creative integrity is safe!

Don't fear that your film will have a short life within the borders of only one state. Robby Fahey, LInCS production manager, explains, "Many LInCS projects are on a local or regional topic that is of interest to a particular station, but the goal is to make these shows available at the national level. The involvement of the station gives the project credibility and gives the independent filmmaker an entrée into the PBS system."

Keeping your independent voice while partnering with professionals, and at the same time getting a funding and broadcast deal? Maybe Santa Claus exists after all.

Dear Doc Doctor:

How can I tell if my film has potential for a successful outreach campaign and if it is worth the sweat?

Nowadays, with the abundance of resources on the internet and the convenience of email communication, outreach campaigns require a lot less money, time, and sweat than they used to. Still, it's wise to figure out if grassroots efforts are for you and your film.

For some filmmakers outreach is not an afterthought. Award-winning producer and director Catherine Gund, producer of *A Touch of Greatness* (2004, directed by Leslie Sullivan) says: "I become interested in a documentary subject because of the outreach and community organizing potential. I wouldn't begin to make a film that couldn't be used directly by a targeted audience. With *A Touch of Greatness*, a portrait of a very progressive and inspiring teacher, we knew that we had the entire community of educators to work with. In fact, we didn't wait to have a finished film to reach out to them and collaborate."

In general, the making of the film itself will lead you to the organizations dealing with your topic. But, if for some odd reason this hasn't happened, it's not too late to take action. You will have to hurry though; developing relationships with nonprofits that have access to

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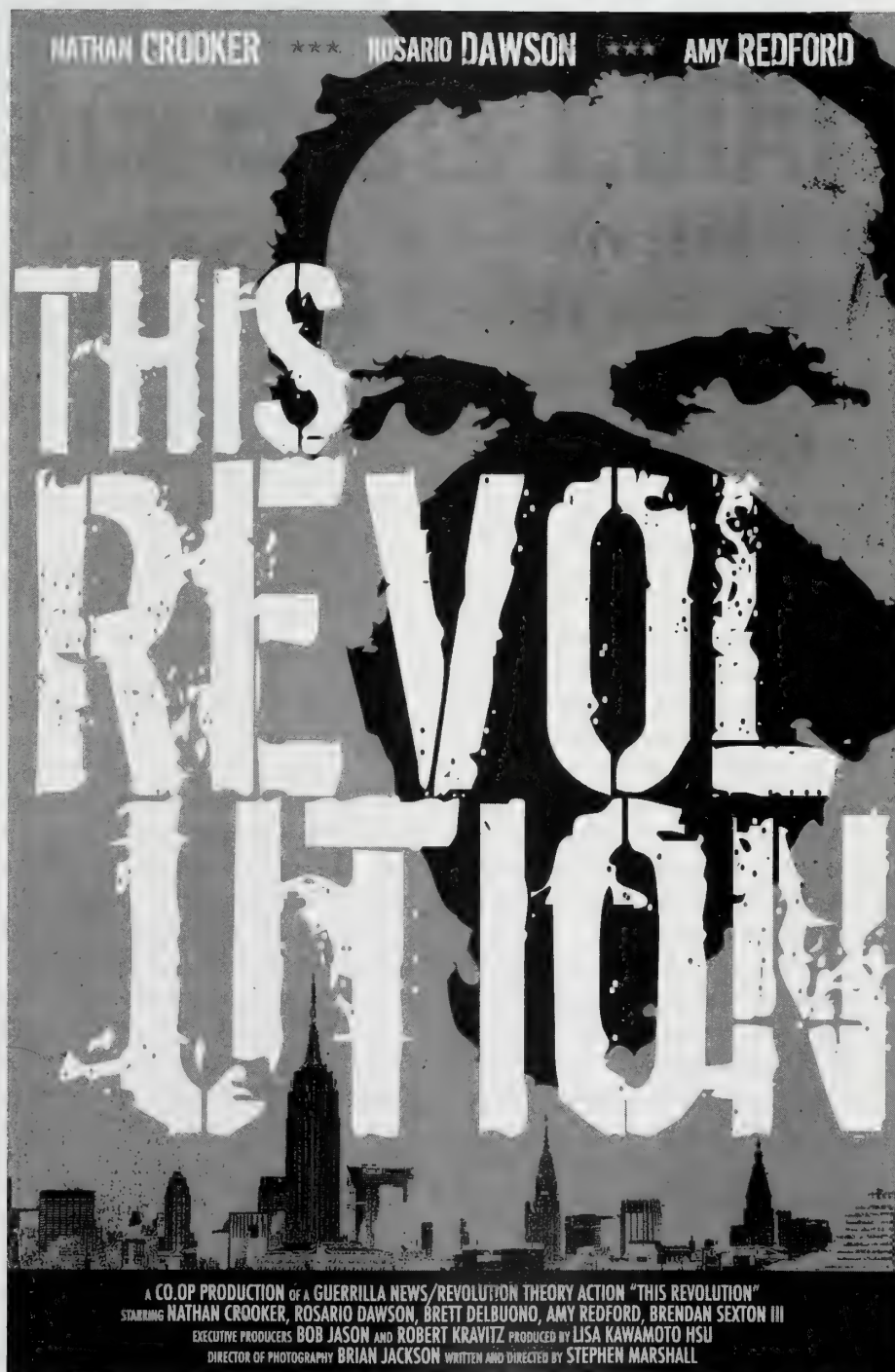
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prospective targeted audiences takes time.

After an inventory of the obvious—as well as the more subtle angles—of your film, whether finished or not, the next obligatory step is to get familiar with the resources offered by mediarights.org, workingfilms.org, and centerforsocialmedia.org. They have plenty of information on how to develop an outreach campaign and function as a bridge between filmmakers and nonprofits seeking media.

You might also want to do a search for articles in newspapers and journals covering your film's issues. It will give you a sense of the talk around town, and if there is an aspect of your film that is particularly current: a bill due in Congress or a recent case that further proves the point of your documentary. Finally, check in with universities—academics are at the forefront of research on many social issues and topics, and their students are an eager audience.

Based on the responses you get from this research, you can gauge the outreach viability of your project. However, I strongly believe that there is always an audience and a way to reach it. Whichever path you choose for your film, remember poet Antonio Machado's words: "Traveller, there is no road, you make the road as you go." ★



The Cost of Clearance

The expense and complications of using copyrighted materials

By Matt Dunne

It may not be what you remember about the award-winning documentary *Hoop Dreams*, but a scene in which a family sings “Happy Birthday” to their son turned out to be a major headache for the filmmakers, Steve James and Frederick Marx. Including the song cost them \$15,000 to \$20,000 for a single verse.

It’s a reality faced by every documentary filmmaker on a shoestring budget—the increasing costs for rights clearance. Buying the rights to use historical film footage or to include a subject singing standards like “God Bless America” and “Happy Birthday” can cost big money. Beyond the monetary cost, however, there’s the time cost of completing extensive paperwork, tracking down the owner of an image or piece of footage, and trying to get him or her to return your phone call.

One cautionary tale for filmmakers is what happened with *Eyes on the Prize*, the well-known 14-part series about the civil rights movement that debuted on public television in 1987. Because the clearance rights to archival footage used in the film expired, *Eyes on the Prize* cannot be shown on television or released on DVD until the rights are cleared again. [see News, page 9]

A new report by Patricia Aufderheide and Peter Jaszi, both from American University, details the scope of the problem. “Untold Stories: Creative Consequences of the Rights Clearance Culture for Documentary Filmmakers” provides a host of nightmarish case studies. Gordon Quinn, a founder of Kartemquin Films, recently saw his budget grow by \$100,000 due to copyright clearance issues. When Jonathan Caouette made a film about his dysfunctional family for an estimated \$218, he



***Hoop Dreams* filmmakers (l-r) Steve James, Peter Gilbert, and Frederick Marx had to pay over \$15,000 to use a single verse of a copyrighted song in their film (Fine Line Features)**

was shocked to see the film’s budget skyrocket to \$400,000 after he had cleared all necessary copyrights.

The concept of copyrighting creative work has a long and complicated history. The first copyright laws were created in early 18th century England at the urging of the established printer/publishers of the time who wanted to put a stop to the upstart printers outside of London. Legal folklore suggests that in order to put a good face on the lobbying effort, the advocates invoked the interest of the authors, avoiding the fact that the publishers typically did not pay royalties to the original creator. In later years, courts leaned toward protection of the creator, but there continues to be uncertainty about whether copyright laws exist to protect the intellectual property of individual artists or the corporate interests of companies like Disney.

But over the last 20 years, starting with the consolidation of image libraries and furthered by the profit potential of mass

production, the pendulum has swung back toward corporate interests. Disney successfully lobbied Congress to increase the period of years before copyrighted material enters the public domain by 20 years (from the life of the author plus 50 years to the life of the author plus 70 years for individual works or 75 to 95 years in the case of works of corporate authorship or those published before 1978). Now other copyright holders are shortening terms of licenses for filmmakers.

While many filmmakers are willing to take risks on using images that simply appear in the background of their works, their distributors and producers are not. High profile cases involving sampling by musical artists have made these gatekeepers—and their insurance companies—understandably nervous. This nervousness has led to requests for proof of copyright clearance in films that would have attracted little attention 10 years ago.

Aufderheide and Jaszi’s study reinforces the sense in the indie community

that the problem has reached a crisis point.

Documentary filmmakers talked about abandoning projects because of cost or self-censoring material. In some cases 60 percent of entire budgets are going to purchase clearance rights. Other filmmakers go through elaborate efforts to avoid the need to acquire rights, including turning off televisions in scenes where loud background programming would more truthfully reflect the reality.

The study also finds that the clearance climate is so confusing that gatekeepers go overboard in insisting on clearances that may not be necessary and should actually fit under the so-called fair use protections allowable when, as Jaszi puts it, "the public cultural benefits of the use outweigh the private economic costs it may impose." Fear of the unknown may be as damaging as the cost of clearances actually required under the law.

All in all, it's a pretty grim picture, say independent filmmakers. Aufderheide and Jaszi quote public television veteran producer Danny Anker: "I have watched over the years as these prices have skyrocketed, in particular, for newsreel footage, and how these little archive houses that used to work very closely with filmmakers were gobbled up by bigger companies."

Clearly, a solution to this murky legal limbo is needed.

Some in the film legal community, including Duke University Law Professor David Lange, have called for Congress to pass a law creating a special category for documentary filmmakers under the federal copyright law. The argument is that documentaries represent a special type of creative production, one that provides an important public service, as opposed to mere entertainment. But even if there were a way to allow documentarians to protect their own creations while being exempt from the copyright protections extended to other artists, it would be a tough sell. One can only imagine certain members of Congress referring to this type of legislation as "The Michael Moore Protection Act."

A second option would be to force a legal test case to define the appropriate limits of fair use in a court of law. As tempting as a high profile legal battle may be to some artists, Aufderheide and Jaszi argue that the approach is probably too risky and could lead to the documentary film community being outgunned by hotshot Hollywood legal teams.

A third option, and the one recommended in the report, is to create a published industry standard for appropriate fair use in documentaries and then ask filmmakers to start following those practices in a disciplined way. Once the standards of practice are created, associations could formally adopt these practices and participate in educational outreach to ensure adherence. In the authors' opinion, this would create a status quo that will ease gatekeepers' anxieties and deter lawsuits against filmmakers who agree to follow the new rules.

Of course, independent filmmakers have a unique perspective on all this. The artists who participated in Aufderheide and Jaszi's study said they were fundamentally conflicted around copyright. Aufderheide summarized in a recent interview, "What we heard from filmmakers is 'I love my copyright and copyright is crippling my work.'"

So Aufderheide and Jaszi argue that filmmakers are the best people to deliberate and create the new standards. "Documentary filmmakers who are surviving in the commercial [world] are not wild-eyed radicals," Jaszi said. "They are uniquely qualified to produce a consensus document that is useful because they see both sides: the creator and the consumer of copywritten material."

The approach has precedent. In the early 1990s, media academics began having similar difficulties getting books published that included stills from films referenced in their research. Clearance efforts were incredibly difficult and the purchase price of rights often prohibitive. But publishers balked at going ahead without comprehensive clearances. In response, a commission of film academics wrote a paper outlining appropriate fair

use in an academic context and distributed it to publishers. With the document in hand, publishers went ahead and produced the books. According to Jaszi, no one ever sued.

Unfortunately, the recent critical and commercial successes of documentary films might actually make this approach more challenging. Ten years ago, Hollywood might have put the documentary film industry in the same category as academic publishing. But the financial success of films such as *Winged Migration* and *Fahrenheit 9/11* may have the owners of relevant licenses dreaming of dollar signs now.

Jaszi points out, though, that there have been no lawsuits to date over the use of an otherwise licensed image or piece of music in a documentary film. Part of this might be the result of overprotective gatekeepers limiting exposure, but the authors think it might be a similar fear by the license holders that a court might rule in a way that would broaden the definition of fair use and threaten future profits. As an example, Robert Greenwald was denied the rights to use talk show footage from Fox for his film *Outfoxed: Rupert Murdoch's War on Journalism*. He went ahead and used the footage and although he did prepare extensively for a legal battle, Fox let it slide.

Aufderheide and Jaszi are spending the next six months convening groups of documentary filmmakers to establish a set of standards. They are starting with creating a clearinghouse of best practices for applying fair use and will initiate a dialogue that encourages filmmakers to look at copyright from both perspectives and grapple with the complexities of creating specific protocols. The first example of this effort is a "frequently asked questions" resource that can be found at <http://centerforsocialmedia.org>. All documentary filmmakers interested in participating in this process are encouraged to contact the center to get involved. The active participation by documentary filmmakers may be the only way to bring sanity and balance to the clearance process. ★



In one episode of "Postcards from Buster," Buster meets kids from the Shoshone and Northern Arapaho tribes on the Wind River Reservation in Lander, Wyoming (PBS)

Big Bird and Beyond

IS PUBLIC BROADCASTING FILLING THE WASTELAND OF COMMERCIAL TV?

BY AMY ALBO

Lois Vossen thinks she has the best job in the world. She works 60 hours a week, and much of her time is spent thinking about or watching films about some of the most deeply troubling aspects of humanity: genocide, the child sex trade, domestic abuse, and sweat shops, to name just a few. But Vossen remains optimistic. "A really well-made film even on the most troublesome topic can be uplifting because it's helping to make the world more humane," she says.

Vossen lives in San Francisco and works for the Independent Television Service (ITVS) as a series producer for the "Independent Lens" series, an hour-long program broadcast on most PBS member stations every Tuesday night at 10. She and three colleagues (from PBS and ITVS) screen hundreds of films and travel to film festivals throughout the world, watching as many as 40 documentaries in a week, seeking out voices that haven't been heard, important issues that haven't been covered, and innovative and compelling styles of telling a story through film.

They whittle those down to roughly 35 independently produced documentary, dramatic, and short films, which they

acquire for about \$20,000 each and broadcast the films—without changing or editing them—during the series' 29-week season. "There's no filter," Vossen says. "No focus group or marketing person tells the filmmaker to change the ending, or to add something, to make it more appealing for X demographic. It is citizen storytellers talking directly to their fellow citizens. It's free to every American household and seen in a commercial-free environment. That is phenomenal in my opinion."

Wednesday mornings are one of the most rewarding perks of Vossen's job. That's when she reads the sometimes hundreds of responses that viewers post on the web about the program the night before. They write in from all over the country, from all walks of life. Some disagree with the content, but the vast majority include an element of heartfelt gratitude for having raised their awareness to an issue, moved or inspired them in some way. "I often feel like nothing I can do can make any possible difference to worldwide problems," writes a viewer from Minnesota after watching *Sisters in Resistance*, a documentary about four women in the French Resistance. "This film moti-

vates me to try. Thank you."

Christianity Today called "Independent Lens" "TV's best kept secret." *The Kansas City Star* called it "the greatest showcase of independent film on TV today." And Nancy Franklin of the *New Yorker* wrote, "Watching 'Independent Lens'...is like going into an independent bookstore—you don't always find what you were looking for but you often find something you didn't even know you wanted."

As social critics predict that American culture is fast on its way to becoming even more polarized and stratified—politically, economically, culturally, and generationally—this seems a rare opportunity for those who live in red and blue states, religious and secular, Republican and liberal, straight and gay, white and black, and all of those shades in between to share a common media experience and about an issue decidedly out of their everyday experience.

It could be argued that this does not happen in the same way—with outreach efforts and supporting curriculum ideas for educators—anywhere else on the spectrum. And that's what public television, created in the late 1960s, was designed to be—not just an alternative but an antidote to the "vast wasteland" of commercial television.

The Public Broadcasting Act passed in 1967 mandated that public broadcasting must have "instructional, educational, and cultural purposes," serve as "a forum for controversy and debate" and "a voice for groups in the community that may otherwise be unheard" so that we could "see America whole, in all its diversity."

From this vantage point, at least with these 29 hours of programming, public broadcasting seems to be alive and well, executing its mandate beautifully.

The Trouble with Buster

Now pan over to the cartoon bunny Buster on PBS Kids. Children's and educational programming have always been public television's safe haven. In 1995, Newt Gingrich proposed to eliminate federal funding for PBS and learned that no one can go up against Big Bird and win. So the controversy last January involving a PBS Kid's program was particularly touchy.

In "Postcards from Buster," a new program developed to provide an after-school, non-commercial alternative for the 4-8-year-old crowd, Buster travels around the country meeting real-life children and experiencing their very different cultures and communities. In the controversial "Sugartime!" episode, Buster travels to Vermont and meets up with his host, 11-year-old



In one episode of "Postcards from Buster," Buster meets Farah, a 10-year-old Muslim girl, while visiting the Sears Tower (PBS)

Emma, to learn about farm life and maple sugaring. It's all very innocuous until they meet Emma's parents, who are both women. When Buster meets Emma's friend Lily, also being raised by two women, he comments, "That's a lot of moms," the show's only reference to same-sex parenting.

Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings found the episode inappropriate for children, and on her second day on the job she requested that PBS refund the federal money (\$125,000) provided to produce the program. In a letter to PBS President Pat Mitchell this past January, Spellings wrote that the purpose of the funding received from Congress and the Department of Education "certainly was not to introduce this kind of subject matter to children."

On that same day, PBS announced its decision not to distribute the "Sugartime!" episode to its member stations, stating that "we recognize this is a sensitive issue, and we wanted to make sure that parents had an opportunity to introduce this subject to their own children in their own time." PBS insists that its decision not to distribute the program nationally was prompted by concerns from its member stations and not in response to Spellings's letter. Despite having organized an internal investigation presumably to prove that point, Mitchell announced in February that she would step down as president when her contract expires in June 2006. She said that she felt no pressure, either from outside or inside, in making her decision to leave.

Regardless of the panel's findings, the "Sugartime!" controversy illustrates the PBS conundrum—its lack of independent funding—and raises the billion-dollar question: Can PBS programming be truly independent, and true to its mandate, if 50 percent of its annual operating budget comes from the government and corporate underwriters? Can PBS be free from political or corporate pressure if they are dependent on them for their existence? The Corporation for Public Broadcasting,



Jamila Emami filming *Afghanistan Unveiled* in a clinic in Kandahar (Polly Hyman and the AINA Women's Filming Group)

which provides fund to PBS, NPR, and PRI, was designed for precisely this purpose—to shield PBS from political meddling. But it appears the firewall is down.

Critics argue that PBS, pressured by budget constraints, has cozied up to corporate sponsors, to a conservative administration and Congress, and to the former FCC chief Michael Powell (who left his post in March), and to Republican board members at CPB, by changing its programming to include shows that feature such conservative commentators as CNN's Tucker Carlson and Paul Gigot from *The Wall Street Journal*. Observers wonder how they could possibly be considered an alternative to commercial media—they *are* the commercial media. Meanwhile, critics on the right have accused public broadcasting of being a hotbed of liberalism.

When Sally Jo Fifer, president of ITVS, hears those claims, she thinks the definitions of liberal and conservative need to be recast. "Are issues of cultural diversity and inequity liberal?" she asks. "Do liberals own the problems of poverty because they talk about it? Are any topics that deal with morality somehow a conservative topic?"

The Funding Conundrum

It's hard to disagree that America's public broadcast system is undercapitalized. It is the least publicly funded public broadcaster in any democratic country. The average American pays about \$1 per year through federal taxes. The average Canadian pays \$17. In Great Britain, it's \$27 per person. In a recent speech, Mitchell pointed out that PBS spends less producing 2,000 hours of programming than HBO spent to promote "The Sopranos."

The problem is not just the amount of funding but its reliance on the political tides of government, on corporations and foundations, on unpopular fund drives and on decreasing membership dues at PBS's 49 member station.

This precarious funding situation puts at risk not only public television's editorial integrity but also its non-commercial integrity. Recently PBS allowed underwriting spots to increase from 15 seconds to 30 seconds. They are, in effect, commercials—arguably toned down, but still corporations selling their "hope in the future" and their wares, even to children. It's five minutes compared to commercial television's 17 minutes, but it's still advertising.

To solve the funding crisis, there are several proposals on the table to secure a multibillion-dollar trust fund from Congress. Mitchell has proposed a \$5 billion trust fund that could be financed by the FCC auction of the analog spectrum (publicly owned airwaves worth several tens of billions of dollars) to wireless companies. A permanent trust fund would help ease the financial pressures of the government mandated transition from analog broadcast to digital television, estimated to cost public television nearly \$2 billion. It would also help public television reinvent itself in the new media landscape. For example, more than 2,000 new digital channels will be available to public television, but there is little to no money to develop new programming for those channels.

There are widely divergent ideas of how the trust fund should be set up and what type of programming vision it should fund. And there are concerns that the discussion is not open or inclusive enough. The challenge, and it's a serious one, is to somehow present a unified voice before Congress. Any hint of divisiveness could easily aid critics and undermine the initiative.

Does PBS matter?

The media landscape has changed dramatically in the 36 years since PBS was created. Instead of three networks, PBS is now competing with some 500 channels (although they are all owned by six media conglomerates). And some of those channels (HBO, A&E, Discovery, Sundance) are broadcasting the kinds of shows that were exclusively the domain of PBS.

The issue isn't so much the content, according to Sally Jo Fifer, but rather the intention that matters and separates public interest media from commercial media. Fifer makes an analogy: "If we're having a conversation and your goal is to sell me a vacuum cleaner, that is going to be a very different interaction than if we're talking about how to solve a problem." PBS treats the viewer as a citizen and not as a consumer. Its goal is to inform and engage the public as citizens, to build and take care of healthy communities—not to increase the bottom line.

But in today's entertainment-culture-on-steroids, how does PBS interest the public in becoming engaged and informed without resorting to commercial crassness? And furthermore, is PBS the best institution, and should it be the only one to receive funding to accomplish this goal?

Expanding the Digital Horizon

"PBS will never be a significant player in the emerging digital landscape because of its inability to free itself of governmental pressures," says Jeffrey Chester, executive director of the Center for Digital Democracy. He points out that even if the trust fund initiative is successful, Congress will still appropriate

the money annually. Their desperation for funding, Chester believes, will lead to inevitable concessions that will take them further away from their mandate. Having said that, Chester adds, "We should try to fix it if we can, and it's very important for independents to enter into the debate and remind the public that PBS has a larger mission than just education." What Chester finds hopeful is that with the new media landscape of expanded cable, satellite, and broadband, it's now possible to bypass the public broadcasting system.

Clay Shirky, media consultant and New York University adjunct professor, describes the current media situation as a "freak out." Most people agree that it's a virtual free-for-all, and it's anyone's best guess how it will all play out. What seems to be clear is that the media incumbents (both commercial and public) stand to lose the most. The tendency is to enter into lockdown mode to protect your share of the pie. For advocates of public media, a vital component of a healthy democracy is at stake.

"If free and independent journalism committed to telling the truth without fear or favor is suffocated, the oxygen goes out of democracy," Bill Moyers warned in a keynote address to the National Conference on Media Reform.

But what "free and independent journalism" looks like in the future is still being defined.

Google and Yahoo, among others, have begun indexing the content of video from the web and from broadcast and satellite television. It probably won't be long before we can watch and search entire programs on the web as well as access archives. Emerging Pictures is creating a network of digital theatres at art and science institutions throughout the world, lowering distribution costs and broadening distribution possibilities for independent film. The company is also syndicating and digitally broadcasting entire film festivals. The Internet Archive is building a digital library of internet sites and will act as a library, providing free access to everyone. Al Gore and Joel Hyatt have plans for a new cable and satellite network that promises to create a whole new paradigm for the creation and distribution of information and to be "the antidote to the established corporate media."

Peter Leyden, the former features editor of *Wired* and now the so-called knowledge developer at Global Business Network, studied possible scenarios for the future of independent media. What he found exciting was this bottom-up phenomenon of media being fueled by the Millennial Generation, people born after 1982. Leyden says they are tech-savvy, "totally energized," and always connected. They're also incredibly enthusiastic and optimistic about the future, and define success in a different way. If someone in India watches their skateboard video, they're thrilled.

So while the media incumbents, mostly baby boomers, are talking about a daunting, overwhelming, undercapitalized, and somewhat depressing future, these kids are revved up and also widely ignored by the establishment. "The worst thing you could do would be to try to shut them up," Leyden says. "They're the future."



Sisters in Resistance: (l-r) Germaine Tillion, Genevieve de Gaulle Anthoinoz, Jacqueline Pery d'Alincourt, and Anise Postel-Vinay. (Maia Wechsler/ WMM/ITVS)

Harnessing the Unknown

Greater access to information alone does not guarantee a greater perspective or deeper understanding of the world. So who or what will organize and filter this new media for us? How will we know what sources are reliable, or will we care? Who will we trust to give us fair, accurate, and balanced information, or will we even seek it out?

Will we organize ourselves around politics and rely more on partisan-driven blogs? Will we resort to vigilante-like journalism, the kind that took down CBS anchor Dan Rather and CNN news executive Eason Jordan? House parties for *Fahrenheit 9/11*. House parties for *Farenhype 9/11*. Where and how will we come together?

Perhaps the only certainty is that the technology train is moving forward at warp speed and no one is going to slow it down while public interest media figures out who it wants to be.

Clearly, there is no magic pill that will ensure a thriving independent media. ITVS's Fifer suggests that we think of it as an ecosystem and focus on ways to make sure it's healthy. We need to ensure that a good supply of content exists, as well as secure distribution platforms to showcase it. Widely available and inexpensive production equipment does not mean that anyone will know how to tell a good story. We need to support media arts centers, production and media literacy programs in schools, film festivals, as well as public broadcasting.

Leyden summarizes the task at hand: Somehow we need to figure out what can be done, and done well, by the commercial, market-driven forces, what can be done well by a new generation using cutting-edge technologies, and what are the holes that need to be covered by public broadcasting so that we have a vibrant media spectrum and a true democracy.

How we achieve that might not be the best job in the world, but it's an important one. ★



Rooftop's events often combine music and film on a stage above the city (photo courtesy of Rooftop Films)

A Film with a View

INDEPENDENTS TAKE TO THE ROOF

BY DAVID ALM

In New York, a rooftop is not merely a rooftop. Part refuge, part observation deck, the roof is where New Yorkers go to escape, embrace, and celebrate their city. It's no surprise then, that filmmakers have long used rooftops to convey New York life: they're ubiquitous, photogenic, and, most of all, emblematic. Think of all the rooftop shootouts and foot chases in the great New York gangster films—from *The Musketeers of Pig Alley* (1912) to *Once Upon a Time in America* (1984). Or the pigeon coops in *On the Waterfront* (1954), *Ghost Dog: The Way of the Samurai* (1999), and *The Royal Tenenbaums* (2001)—offering rooftop reprieve to the burdened protagonists of those films. And who can forget the scene in *Annie Hall* (1977), where Alvy (Woody Allen) and Annie (Diane Keaton) fumble around topics of heritage—"You're what Grammy Hall would call a real Jew!"—and photography while sipping white wine on the roof of Annie's Upper East Side apartment building?

Still, barring city-sponsored screenings in Bryant and Central Parks, going to the movies in New York has generally been an indoor activity ever since Thomas Edison's first coin-operated Kinetoscope parlor opened back in 1894, at Broadway and 26th

Street. Today, the city's famous venues are grand movie palaces, converted Chinese and Yiddish theaters, and art cinemas housed in swanky neighborhoods like Soho and Tribeca. In short: very expensive real estate. And while microcinemas have cropped up in unconventional spaces across the United States—from funeral homes to auto repair shops—the concept simply isn't feasible on a modest budget in New York. Who has the space?

The answer can be found in the classic paradox describing who owns New York City: everyone, and no one.

Enter Rooftop Films, a nonprofit film festival and production collective started in 1997 by Mark Elijah Rosenberg, then just 22, fresh out of college, and recently returned to his hometown. "Being a native New Yorker, I'd always spent a lot of time on rooftops," he says. "They're these sort of private/public spaces that you can only access through the building. So you have this private entrance, but then everyone can see the outdoors. They're just really wonderful."

Rosenberg majored in film at Vassar College in Poughkeepsie, New York, and moved into a six-floor walk-up in

Manhattan's East Village after graduation. "I used to go up [to my roof] to read, write, and just hang out all the time," he says. "And because I had films and my friends had films, I thought it would be fun to have a party and screening all at once. It just seemed like a natural thing to do."

So he bought a used 16mm projector for \$60, borrowed 200 chairs from a furniture company, and taped a sheet to a wall at the edge of his roof. Then he told everyone he knew about the party, and on the day of the screening he went to a concert in Central Park and passed out business card-size invitations to his roof. Over 300 people turned out for the event, and Rosenberg, whose screening was in massive violation of his lease, was promptly evicted.

"I never thought I was starting a film festival," he says of that first night. "I thought I was hosting a little one-time thing, but it worked out so well that once the next spring rolled around I thought I'd do it again."

Fortunately, Rosenberg's friend Dan Nuxoll, also a 1997 Vassar graduate, and his friend Joshua Breitbart were converting an old East Williamsburg warehouse into a loft when Rosenberg lost his apartment. "We had access to the roof," Nuxoll says, adding that the area was far less regulated than most Manhattan properties. "Artists could get away with doing more there than they could anywhere else in the city. So we asked our landlord if we could build a screen on the roof, and he said, 'Yeah sure, whatever. Go ahead.'"

Breitbart and Nuxoll hosted the festival's weekly Friday night screenings for the next five years, while Rosenberg remained the organization's artistic director. In that time, Rooftop Films grew exponentially: its annual submissions more than tripled, from a couple hundred during the late 1990s to 900 in 2003. It now features up to 16 weeks of programming each summer, DVDs, a zine, production grants, education initiatives, and traveling programs that have screened across the United States and in Canada. Last year 1,200 submissions came from all over the world and Nuxoll, who has been program director since 2001, says he expects to receive between 1,500 and 2,000 films by the end of the 2005 season.

They don't advertise for lack of funds, Nuxoll says, but instead rely on word-of-mouth, cold-calling film schools, send-

ing out emails, and distributing self-made posters and postcards by hand.

That shotgun approach draws the gamut of film projects, including experimental shorts, animations, documentaries, and feature films. And while some of them are one-off productions by first-time filmmakers, others come from highly accomplished independent directors. Sam Green, who co-directed the Oscar-nominated documentary *The Weather Underground* (2002), screened one of his early films, *Pie Fight '69*, at Rooftop in the summer of 2000. That season, Rooftop also screened a short film by Peter Sollet about a group of teenage kids on the Lower East Side titled *Five Feet High and Rising*, which later

became the acclaimed 2002 feature *Raising Victor Vargas*.

In recent years, the Rooftop team has taken programs to art galleries, cafes, and microcinemas in New Orleans, San Francisco, Seattle, and Vancouver, among other cities. They also moved from East Williamsburg to Gowanus, where they have hosted the last two seasons atop the Old American Can Factory, and this summer they will move the operation once again to an even larger Brooklyn rooftop, at Automotive High School in the heart of Williamsburg.



Rooftop now screens films for 16 weeks every summer
(photo courtesy of Rooftop Films)

Such growth raises the question: In a world where nonprofits and independent media organizations face enormous survival odds, how has Rooftop Films managed so well?

"Rooftop has the kind of energy around it that characterized the New York film scene in the 1960s—or at least the closest you can get to it these days," says Todd Rohal, a Washington, DC-based filmmaker whose short films have screened at numerous festivals, including Rooftop, Slamdance, and SXSW. "The films are not all overly raunchy or dirty, and it's not the in-your-face, beyond-the-point web-toons stuff that the modern underground fests are filled with. Rather, it's an atmosphere of not knowing what to expect next and feeling like you're squatting in this property watching films that might never be seen anywhere else. Rooftop is that last little bit of the old New York underground, a venue out in the middle of the nowhere end of Brooklyn that allows you to see films that are either on the verge of making it big or the verge of disappearing forever."

Not surprisingly, this echoes Rosenberg's initial vision for the



Steve Collins's *The Plumber* screened at rooftop, after being turned away by over 30 other festivals



Todd Rohal's *Hillybilly Robot* was one of Rooftop's recent selections

organization. "I think a lot of film festivals start with people thinking they're going to get these people to sponsor it, and these people to host it, and this will be the theme, and this will be the idea, and this is the 5-year plan." Rosenberg says. "And once they've got all that they try to see the films. I was really the opposite. I'd seen a lot of great films that I didn't think a lot of people were seeing. So I thought it would be a great way to get people to come and see them, to have this gimmick of doing it outside, because everyone in New York wants to be outside in the summer."

Everyone might be a stretch, but Rooftop Films did welcome 3,000 guests in 2003, and in 2004, 4,000 turned out. The reception could reflect Brooklyn's relatively newfound status as a hot nightspot, even for Manhattanites, as much as the quality of Rooftop's programming. And this poses a challenge for the organization: to separate itself from the so-called "hipster invasion" that is rapidly transforming Brooklyn's working-class and ethnic neighborhoods into a playground for rich 20-somethings.

"We've had audiences that are very ethnically mixed," Nuxoll says. "But the truth of it is, whether or not our programming caters to white audiences, our audiences are still very much dominated by Caucasians. We definitely have a disproportionate number of people [under 40] who've gotten a college education or graduate degrees. And we've worked really hard over the years to get communities more involved with the organization—particularly neighborhoods in which we're showing films. And we've been successful in various ways, but it's not easy to shake that perception. I think a lot of filmmakers feel more comfortable submitting to festivals that they think are run by people with backgrounds like their own."

With that in mind, Rooftop has made a priority of programming more films by women, people of color, and international filmmakers. But the emphasis remains unequivocally on quality and on providing a venue for promising filmmakers—whoever and wherever they might be.

"I think the best films that we show are the best films there are," says Sarah Palmer, the organization's festival director, zine editor, and another Vassar grad (1999). "And I think our films

are particular in the way that we curate them. We have regional programs and other sorts of programs, like home movies, and we always think about how our unique venues are matched with our unique programs."

To create each program, Palmer, Nuxoll, and Rosenberg take turns viewing every film submitted to the festival. After viewing a given film, they enter its title and filmmaker into a database along with a rating: "Pass," "Consider Low," "Consider High," or "Recommend." Then they start looking for thematic patterns, and potential programs begin to emerge.

"If we see that we've got 25 films with a "Recommend" or "Consider High" rating from Texas, then we think, okay, maybe we should put together a program of just Texas stuff," Nuxoll says. Other categories might include world documentaries, women- or youth-made films, and films from the Midwest. Some categories, such as home movies and New York films, have recurred so often that they're in annual rotation. And certain years, time-specific themes emerge. In 2004, so many politically-oriented films were submitted that the Rooftop team compiled them onto a DVD and even traveled to several swing-states to help get out the vote. "But we always do at least two programs that are not organized around any specific theme," Nuxoll says, "other than that we like them."

Each program lasts between 80 minutes and two hours, and consists of approximately six to 17 films. Nuxoll says they try to incorporate one or two longer films to avoid what he recounts as "one of the most difficult watching experiences" he's ever had. "These guys put together an evening of all one-minute films," he says. "It was just a one-hour program, but it was 60 one-minute films—and it was maddening. It was like watching commercials."

Another cause for Rooftop's success appears to be its support of not only great films, but of the people who make them. One dollar of every ticket sale goes into a grant for filmmakers who have screened work at Rooftop and who submit a simple application.

"It's a way of giving back to the filmmaking community, of fostering production, and really coming up with a network and a creative way of helping true independent filmmakers,"



Rooftop's success appears to be its support of not only great films, but of the people who make them (photo courtesy of Rooftop Films)

Rosenberg says. "They're not people working through Miramax, but people who are really working on their own films. And we want to get their films made."

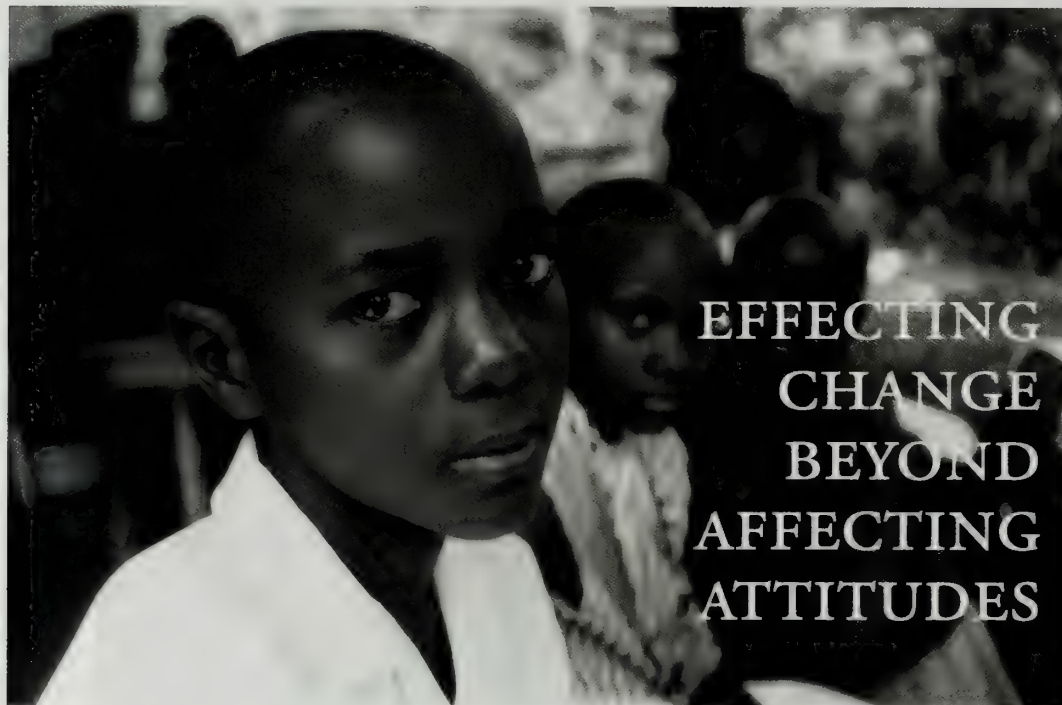
One of Rooftop's regulars, Steve Collins, screened his short film *The Plumber* during an "open projector" portion of Rooftop's inaugural night after getting turned away by over 30 other festivals. "Mark never rejected me, so I like this relationship better than my relationship with programmers at Sundance, Berlin, etc.," he says. Rooftop even donated tape stock to Collins for his graduate thesis at the University of Texas, Austin, and provided him with something every filmmaker wants: an audience.

In the future, Rooftop's three principals plan to expand its production arm and become a central resource for the filmmaking community. They also intend to sell programming packages for a small fee to fledgling microcinemas that lack

the contacts and resources they have spent the past eight years acquiring. And of course, like so many nonprofit arts organizations, they would love to hire more help. "Mark, Dan, and I are the heads of this great film festival," Palmer says, "but we're also the ones unloading the U-Haul at three in the morning. It would be great for certain things to run themselves a little more."

At the end of the day—or week, as it were—all their hard work pays off in the simplest way. "I'm most happy when I stand at the back of the show with Mark and Dan, and we watch an audience enraptured by a film on a summer night in New York," Palmer says. "When we watch people watching films that they've never imagined before and enjoying them, and watch filmmakers meeting people after a show, that's really what's most fulfilling. Seeing people connect in this realm of film." ★

DO-SOMETHING DOCUMENTARIES



I Promise Africa was one of the MediaRights Releases for the 4th Annual Media That Matters Film Festival

BY LISA SELIN DAVIS

In the recently released film *Hotel Rwanda* (2004), Joaquin Phoenix's character, a hard-living videographer who has just filmed the unfathomable massacre of Tutsis by Hutus, turns to Don Cheadle's character, Paul Rusesabagina, and says, "If people see this they'll say, 'Oh my god, that's horrible,' and then they'll go on eating their dinners."

By the end of the film, I was, like many moviegoers around me, red-eyed, shaken, and shamed. We streamed out of the movie theater saying, "That's so horrible." And many of us then went on to eat our dinners.

Clearly, social issue films have the power to alert us to wrongs, but times have changed since *Titicut Follies* (1967) begot massive reform in mental health care or *The Thin Blue Line* (1988) helped clear Randall Adams of murder charges. These days, social issue filmmakers are doing more than trying to get their movies up on the big screen. They're trying to get their messages to the right people, and motivating audiences to stop eating their dinners and do something. A new breed of documentary outreach allows films to have a life, long after the theater empties or the TV turns off.

I saw *Titicut Follies* in a documentary film class at Hampshire College in the late 1980s. In those days, it was still banned for public viewing, and we had to sign special forms claiming we were social work students and that the viewing was essential to

our professional development. (The ban is now lifted.) In the 1960s, when *Titicut Follies* was released, two important changes helped birth social issue films: new film technologies and massive social unrest. Portable film and video equipment allowed audiences at home to see footage of protesters assaulted by fire hoses or bitten by police dogs on the evening news. Groups like California Newsreel sprung up to help distribute social issue films. Cameras were light enough to slip into mental institutions or come along for the long ride of union fights as in Barbara Kopple's *Harlan County, USA* (1976). We'd never been invited into struggles the way cinema verité allowed us to be. These images were dangerous (hence the *Titicut Follies* ban). They were enough to catapult us into action.

Today's viewers are much more savvy and media-saturated, and five minutes of injustice on the evening news is unlikely to sway popular opinion (Rodney King aside), or, for that matter, political activity. Sometimes watching a movie can make you feel as if you've acted and shared that experience with the film's subjects, when all you've done is sympathized. So the next generation—spurred by new technologies and massive social unrest—looks to outreach to effect social change.

"The difference between outreach and marketing is that you want it to make an impact. You want the media to be used in some way that's fulfilling the mission of why it was made in the

first place,” says Nicole Betancourt, executive director of MediaRights, an organization that unites social issue documentaries with nonprofits, libraries, activists, and educators.

Outreach is a plan for distributing the message, not just the film. “We start from the premise that we’re creating change around a specific goal and audience in each project,” says Hakima Abbas, a program associate at Witness, a New York-based group co-founded by singer-songwriter Peter Gabriel to train human rights groups in documentary production. With each project they take on, Witness and their partnering human rights group devise a “video action plan.”

“What do we want to change: a specific legislation, or a specific policy?” asks Habbas. “Or do we want to mobilize a community to do something, and then who would our target audiences be? Who would be best reached and could create this change, and then, from there, how would we structure this story so that people are moved to create this change? It’s a little like working backwards as opposed to the traditional documentary where the story would lead us to the end.”

For example, Witness partnered with nonprofits Books Not Bars and the Ella Baker Center for Human Rights to create *System Failure: Violence, Abuse and Neglect in the California Youth Authority* (2004) specifically for policymakers, community organizations, and parents of imprisoned children (though it also had a theatrical release). After screening the film at the state capitol in January—the first such screening, according to Witness—reform measures for the California Youth Authority were introduced.

“What we do basically is PR work for unpopular causes,” says Emily Kunstler, co-founder of Off Center Productions, a group dedicated to using video as a tool for organizing and social justice. “It’s all theater. It’s just trying to sell your side of the story.”



Kirsten Johnson, Angela Tucker, and Katy Chevigny filming *Deadline* in Chicago
(photo courtesy of Big Mouth Productions)

Audience—the story’s potential buyers—is the key component in outreach. Those who are inclined to watch public television or attend festivals like Human Rights Watch might be already in the choir, but just don’t have the power to make change. “It’s not necessarily the number of people who see your piece, but who are the key people that need to see it who will be able to make this change,” Habbas says.

“Think about what your goals are for the impact of the film before you make it, who your audience is,” Betancourt suggests. “What organizations can help you reach your audiences and help you reach the impact you want to have? Try to partner with those organizations early on.”

Off-Center teams up with nonprofit law firms to make documentaries about specific criminal justice cases. Founders Emily and her sister Sarah Kunstler are the daughters of civil rights attorney William Kunstler, and their work started as a way to document a poorly handled drug-bust in Tulia, Texas, a case the William Moses Kunstler Fund for Racial Justice had taken on. The resulting documentary, *Tulia, Texas: Scenes from the Drug War* (2002), was shown to members of the judicial community both locally and nationally and led to new representation for the defendants, new legislation in the Texas senate, and the indictment of a narcotics officer. Groups like the NAACP and the

ACLU have used the video in presentations.

"If our goal with our films was purely to get a large audience and try to sway popular opinion, we would feel enormously frustrated and useless," Kunstler says. "Our work is most gratifying when we're influential behind the scenes. Otherwise, it's too broad. You have to be more strategic."

"The key component to a successful outreach campaign is when you have an audience, what are you going to do with them?" Betancourt asks. "How are you going to maximize that moment where you have them in your pocket and give them a chance to become active citizens or participants in what they're watching as opposed to depressed or couch potatoes?"

Media-makers can either offer their films to existing campaigns or design campaigns around their films. This might



The Thin Blue Line, 1988 (Miramax Films)

include presenting a way to make donations, a petition they can sign, or a letter they can send. Some filmmakers create study guides and get them out to schools. Or, inspired by the way groups like MoveOn.org can motivate large numbers of people with a simple click of the mouse, use the internet with a "take action" link.

Tod Lending's *Legacy* (2000), a documentary about the cyclical nature of urban poverty in four generations of one family, was targeted at both a general and legislative audience and inspired federal housing legislation called the LEGACY bill. It has a viewing guide and offers access to advocacy and informational links. At screenings of the film *Blue Vinyl* (2002), the filmmakers handed out stamped postcards that objected to corporate use of PVC packaging.

"You really want to give people tools to make change at every point, because very few people are going to," says Angela Tucker, outreach coordinator for the social issue documentary company Big Mouth Productions. "But if they have something in their hand that they can do, at least they can't say they didn't know what to do." Big Mouth's documentary *Deadline* (2004) is a verité account of Illinois Governor George Ryan's decision to commute the death sentence of 167 death row inmates during his last few days in office. Like the websites of many social issue films,

www.deadlinethemovie.com has a "Get involved" link that connects you to your local governor's office, allows you to sample letters and editorials, register to vote, and make donations.

Problem is, many filmmakers don't want to spend their time devising a strategic outreach plan; it takes as much time and energy as the production itself. "There's the filmmaker goal, which is the 'I personally as the filmmaker want to have a film that shows on HBO, and I want to have a theatrical release,'" Tucker says. "The whole other piece of it is wanting to have your film make some kind of impact." Besides MediaRights, which now boasts 100,000 unique web visits a day and keeps a roster of over 10,000 members and 6,000 films, a number of outreach-only companies provide services to match movies with social change campaigns.

North Carolina-based Working Films fits filmmakers with organizers, grassroots campaigns, and all manners of community education efforts around social and economic justice issues (they coordinated the campaign around *Blue Vinyl*). Active Voice, in San Francisco, is a team of strategic communication specialists who partner movies with change-makers. Their work includes the Television Race Initiative, which uses "high impact" programming around race and identity to start community dialogues. The Human Rights Video Project curates human rights-related videos, joining them with libraries and advocacy groups to get the films out to a non film-festival audience. There's the National Center for Outreach in Wisconsin, which brings public television programming off the small screen and into the classroom and community. And Outreach Extensions is a California-based consulting firm that uses a strategic methodology they call "building synergistic outreach pathway" to connect media with community or education groups. Part of their work includes the Reentry National Media Outreach Campaign, using several documentaries to make change around post-prison life. Groups like these can expand a film's audience exponentially or target it to the right corner of the world.

The other advantage to focusing on a film's outreach strategy is funding. "A lot of foundations are more comfortable in funding films that have outreach campaigns, or they're more comfortable funding outreach than the actual film," Betancourt says. "They're saying, 'Why are we giving money to this film instead of a needle exchange program?' Filmmakers need to think about how the film is going to be used in the field and who's going to use it and why do they need it."

The outreach campaign for *Deadline*, for instance (which included screenings for key legal officials and law schools around the country and partnerships with groups like the Legal Defense Fund and the Center for Human Rights), had a separate funding stream than the film, including the Ford Foundation and the Open Society Institute. The film is especially timely as New York State reconsiders its position on the death penalty, and outreach has included screenings in Albany for key people involved in the debate.

But how do you measure the efficacy of your film, either individually or as part of a campaign? "Changing legislature is

hard," Tucker says. "Even if New York doesn't bring back the death penalty, we can't say it was because of *Deadline* outreach."

"That's something that a lot of people have been grappling with," Betancourt says. "Huge multinational companies like Reebok spend a lot of money analyzing the effectiveness of their advertising campaigns, and they can also say, 'We sold more sneakers' or, 'Wow, we've changed the public perception of high impact sports.' But documentary filmmakers barely have enough money to promote their film or get it out there, let alone analyze its effectiveness."

But there are ways to try and track the impact, which is important information for your funders, for your cause, and for your career, since realizing your advocacy goal can only help with the next project. You can follow how many films were distributed. You can hand out surveys at films asking how or if it changed minds or will inspire change. You can track information on your website, including how many hits you get, and how many times someone links to "take action."

Documentaries can be the tipping point in a social change campaign, where the documentary acts as a kind of palliative that lawmakers or those in positions of power to create change could not otherwise stomach or witness. "It's effective in putting a human face on an issue," Habbas says. "We can talk about numbers in a written report, but seeing the testimony of a woman who has been repeatedly raped in a conflict—it's certainly more emotive and powerful and is more likely to move people to create change."

Kunstler says: "We saw the strength of [*Tulia, Texas*] and the role that it played in that movement, and we felt that we should be exposing more issues of injustice. We've always been activists, but we found that this was a way to affect greater change."

Betancourt says: "It's always hard to say, was it the film that did it, was it the campaign that did it? It takes a lot of people to make change happen. But I do think a film has an emotional hook that can get people to connect to people that they otherwise aren't empathizing with. And if you can empathize with that person who you think is different or outside or not your problem, that's a huge leap." ★



Tulia, Texas: Scenes from the Drug War
(Kunstler Fund for Racial Justice)

Statement of intent #1

PIKE STREET CINEMA

DATE: NOV. 7

TIME: 8:00 PM

LOCATION: Seattle

SCREENING: YES

DATE: 6/8/2004

NAME: Pike Street Cinema

ADDRESS: 1188 Pike St. (Pike at Second)

PHONE: (206) 461-1111

EMAIL: info@pikestreetcinema.org

URL: www.pikestreetcinema.org

PIKE STREET CINEMA is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. All proceeds from screenings go to support the film program. We are a community-based organization and we welcome all people to our screenings. We are committed to providing a safe and comfortable environment for all attendees. We are also committed to providing a high quality screening experience. We are committed to providing a high quality screening experience. We are committed to providing a high quality screening experience.

"Statement of Intent" required for a screening of
Titicut Follies in Seattle, Washington in 1967

Documentary Outreach Organizations

Active Voice

2601 Mariposa Street
3rd floor
San Francisco, CA 94110
415-553-2841
www.activevoice.net

National Center for Outreach

975 Observatory Drive
Madison, WI 53706
866-234-2016
www.nationaloutreach.org

Big Mouth Productions

104 West 14th Street
4th Floor
New York, NY 10011
646-230-6228
www.bigmouthproductions.com

Off-Center Productions

625 Atlantic Avenue
Suite 3303
Brooklyn, NY 11217
718-636-0988
www.off-center.org

Human Rights Video Project

National Video Resources
73 Spring Street, Suite 403
New York, NY 10012
212-274-8080
www.humanrightsproject.org

Outreach Extension

7039 Dume Drive
Malibu, CA 90265
310-589-5180
outext@aol.com (no web address)

Human Rights Watch Festival

350 Fifth Avenue
34th Floor
New York, NY 10118-3299
212-290-4700
www.hrw.org/iff

Witness

80 Hanson Place
5th Floor
Brooklyn, NY 11217
718-783-2000
www.witness.org

MediaRights

104 W. 14th St.
4th Fl.
New York, NY 10011
646-230-6288
www.mediarights.org

Working Films

602 South Fifth Avenue
Wilmington, NC 28401
910-342-9000
www.workingfilms.org

FESTIVALS

By Bo Mehrad

Listings do not constitute an endorsement. We recommend that you contact the festival directly before sending cassette, as details may change after the magazine goes to press. Deadline: 1st of the month two months prior to cover date (e.g., Sept. 1st for Nov. issue). Include festival dates, categories, prizes, entry fees, deadlines, formats & contact info. Send to: festivals@aifw.org

DOMESTIC

ACTION/CUT SHORT FILM FESTIVAL, Aug. 29-Sept. 1, CA. Deadline: March 15; May 15. Cats: short, any style or genre. Awards: \$35,000 in cash & services. Preview on DVD or VHS. Entry Fee: \$40-\$85. Contact: Action/Cut Filmmaking Seminars; filmmaking@actioncut.com;

ALGONQUIN FILM FESTIVAL, May 19-22, PA. Deadline: Apr. 30. This Festival welcomes entries from all over the world & strives to promote independent film, w/ an emphasis on work from the "genius belt" between New York & Philadelphia. Cats: feature, doc, animation, experimental, short, music video, student. Awards: None. Formats: 3/4", VHS, DV, Beta, Digifilm. Preview on VHS. Entry Fee: \$20 (shorts & students), \$40 (features). Contact: Algonquin Film Festival Screening Committee; (267) 981-1139; info@algonquinfest.org;

ALL ROADS FILM FESTIVAL, Sept.-Nov., CA/DC. Deadline: May 7. A multimedia fest & grants program created to provide a platform for indigenous & under-represented minority-culture storytellers. Cats: feature, doc, short, animation, music video. Awards: Audience Awards in each category. Formats: 70mm, 35mm, 16mm, Beta, DigiBeta, Mini-DV. Preview on VHS or DVD. Entry Fee: None. Contact: All Roads Film Project; (202) 857-7692; allroads@ngs.org;

BIG BEAR LAKE INT'L FILM FESTIVAL, Sept. 16-18, CA. Deadline: March 1; April 8 (final scripts); June 20 (final). This year's cultural event will showcase German cinema. The

fest is located in Big Bear Lake, California, nestled in the San Bernardino Nat'l Forest, just two hours outside of Los Angeles. Cats: feature, student, short, script, doc, family. Preview on VHS or DVD. Entry Fee: \$35-\$45. Contact: Monika Skerbelis, Festival & Programming Director; (909) 866-3433; fax: same; bigbearfilmfest@aol.com;

BRIDGE FILM FESTIVAL, April 16, NY. Deadline: April 4. Featuring films by middle- & upper school students attending Quaker schools worldwide & students who are members of the Quaker faith. The goal of the fest is to promote value-based filmmaking on topics that our children & communities grapple w/ regularly, such as integrity, non violence, social conscience & political justice. The fest is not looking for films about Quaker philosophy but films that depict Quaker ideals in action. From the participating schools, finalist films will be chosen & screened & awards are given based on both the quality of filmmaking & content. Entries may be up to 12 min. in length. Cats: doc, Nature, Comedy, Drama, Animation, music video, student, short. Preview on VHS (NTSC). Entry Fee: \$50. Contact: Andy Cohen; (718) 852-1029; fax: 643-4868; acohen@brooklynfriends.org;

BRONX INDEPENDENT FILM FESTIVAL, June 5-9, NY. Deadline: May 2; May 16 (final). Presented by Bronx Stage & Film Company, fest seeks not commercially exhibited prior to fest dates. Cats: feature, doc, short, animation, experimental. Formats: DV. Preview on VHS or DVD. Entry Fee: \$10-\$20. Contact: Festival; film@bronxstage.com;

BROOKLYN INT'L DISABILITY FILM FESTIVAL, July 22-24, NY. Deadline: March 15; April 8 (final). New York City's first int'l disability film fest. The fest honors films about all disabilities & especially recognizes the work of filmmakers w/ disabilities. Outstanding Disability Rights advocates will also be honored. Cats:

feature, doc, short, animation, experimental. Awards: Best Feature, Best Short, Best Doc, Best Animation, Best Experimental Film, Audience Awards. Formats: DV, DVD, 16mm, Beta SP. Preview on VHS. Entry Fee: \$20; \$25 (final). Contact: Long Island University (LIU), Media Arts Dept.; www.brooklyn.liu.edu/bidff/

DC ASIAN PACIFIC AMERICAN FILM FESTIVAL, Oct. 6-15, DC. Deadline: April 1; May 1 (final). The fest's mission is to "bring attention to the creative output from APA communities & encourage the artistic development of APA films in the greater Washington DC metropolitan region." The screenings are held at the Smithsonian Institution's Freer Gallery of Art's Meyer Auditorium, the Hirshhorn Museum & Sculpture, the Canadian Embassy, & other venues. Founded: 2000. Cats: feature, doc, short, experimental, animation. Formats: 16mm, 35mm, Betacam. Preview on VHS (NTSC) or DVD. Entry Fee: \$10 (shorts & features); \$20 (final). Contact: Festival; gene@apafilm.org;

EPFC EXPERIMENTAL FILM FESTIVAL, May 13-15, CA. Deadline: April 1. A festival devoted to experimtnal & doc makers. Films screen in the Echo Park Film Center micro-cinema fest. Cats: doc, experimental, short. Preview on VHS or DVD. Contact: Echo Park Film Center; paolofilm@hotmail.com;

FILM LIFE'S AMERICAN BLACK FILM FESTIVAL, July 13-17, FL. Deadline: April 8. Festival is 5 days of independent films, panels, workshops, Hollywood premieres, live entertainment & the ABFF Awards Dinner. Filmmakers, actors, industry executives, journalists & the public form a creatively charged atmosphere on South Beach. Fest dubs itself as "the premiere int'l black film market & retreat." Founded: 1997. Cats: Feature, Short, doc. Formats: All formats. Preview on VHS. Entry Fee: \$30. Contact: Festival; (212) 966-2411; fax: 966-2219; abff@thefilmlife.com;

HOT SPRINGS DOC FILM FESTIVAL, Oct. 21-30, AR. Deadline: April 8; May 20 (final). Annual fest accepting nonfiction film submissions for one of the country's premier nonfiction film celebrations. Noncompetitive fest honors films & filmmakers each yr. in beautiful Hot Springs Nat'l Park, Arkansas. More than 85 films are screened, incl. the current year's Academy Award nominees in nonfiction cats. Special guest scholars, filmmakers & celebrities participate in forums & lectures. Founded: 1992. Cats: doc. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, 1/2", DVD, Beta. Preview on VHS or DVD. Entry Fee: \$25-\$55. Contact: Darla Dixon, HSDFI; (501) 321-4747; fax: (501) 321-0211; ddixon@sdfi.org; www.hsdfi.org.

HUNGARIAN MULTICULTURAL CENTER FILM AND VIDEO FESTIVAL, Aug 17-19, TX. Deadline: April 20. Annual fest accepts film is dedicated to promote cultural expansion of the visual arts between Hungary & the United States. Work must be under 60 min. in length & been completed in past 2 years. Cats: Animation, Feature, Short, Doc. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, 3/4", 1/2". Preview on VHS (NTSC), incl. SASE for return. Entry Fee: US\$35. Contact: Hungarian Multicultural Center, Inc.; (972) 225-8053; fax: (972) 308-8191; bszechy@yahoo.com; hungarian-multi-cultural-center.com.

KANSAS INT'L FILM FESTIVAL, Sept. 9-16, KS. Deadline: March 31; April 30 (final). The fest is a celebration of independent cinema & features a Think! series of socially conscious documentaries, experimental works, foreign films, & American indies. All films screen in beautifully restored theatres operated by the Fine Arts Theatre Group in the Kansas City area. The Lucid Underground Film Festival of shorts w/ a punk tenacity also screens during KIFF. Cats: doc, feature, short, experimental. Awards: Audience awards; \$250 cash prizes in each category. Formats: 35mm, DV Cam. Preview on VHS or DVD. Entry Fee: \$30; \$40 (final). Contact: Dotty Hamilton; (816) 501-3646; info@kansasfilm.com; www.kansasfilm.com.

LONG ISLAND FILM FESTIVAL, June 21-23, NY. Deadline: April 30; May 31 (final). Annual competitive fest screens over 50 features & shorts submitted from around the world. Cats: feature, short, doc, student, experimental, animation. Awards: 1st prizes presented in all cats (film & video), w/ cash awards TBA. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, 3/4", 1/2", DVD. Preview on VHS. Entry Fee: \$25 (student; 0 to 15 min.); \$40 (15 to 30 min.); \$60 (30-60 min.); \$75 (over 60 min.). Contact: Chris Cooke; (631) 669-2717; fax: 853-4888; suffolkfilm@yahoo.com; www.lifilm.org.

LONG ISLAND INT'L FILM EXPO, July 15-21, NY. Deadline: May 9. This Festival continues to evolve as the premier regional showcases for new, innovative works of local & nat'l independents. Cats: doc, feature, animation, short. Awards: Categorical awards & Jury awards. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, Beta SP, VHS. Preview on VHS. Fee: \$25 (shorts), \$50 (features). The Bellmore Movies; (516) 572-0012; fax: 572-0260; debfilm@optonline.net; www.LongIslandFilm.com.

LUNAFEST, September-October, CA. Deadline: April 30. Fest seeks films by women, for women, or about women. Areas of interest can incl. culture, diversity of people, adventure, sports, the environment, spirituality, inspiration, challenges, relationships & breaking barriers. Program will tour up to 100 venues. Proceeds from fest will benefit The Breast Cancer Fund to assist their efforts to promote awareness & education of womens' health. Films should be no longer than 40 min.. Cats: short, doc, feature, student, family, animation. Awards: Cash prizes. Formats: 1/2", DVD. Preview on VHS. Entry Fee: \$15 made payable to The Breast Cancer Fund. Contact: Allison Justice; allison@aspiringheights.com; www.lunabar.com.

MADCAT WOMEN'S INT'L FILM FESTIVAL, Sept., CA. Deadline: March 25; May 13 (final). MadCat showcases innovative & challenging works from around the globe. Fest features experimental, avant garde & independent

works by women of all lengths & genres. Works can be produced ANY year. It is the fest's goal to expand the notion of women's cinema beyond the limitations of films about traditional women's issues. All topics/subjects will be considered. Founded: 1996. Cats: any style or genre. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, super 8, Beta SP, 1/2", Mini-DV. Preview on VHS or DVD. Entry Fee: \$10-\$30 (sliding scale, pay what you can afford). Contact: Festival; (415) 436-9523; fax: 934-0642; info@madcatfilmfestival.org; www.madcatfilmfestival.org.

MAINE INT'L FILM FESTIVAL, July 15-24, ME. Deadline: April 30. A leading New England regional film fest w/ an exceptional emphasis on int'l productions. Festival seeks features & shorts "shot in Maine or w/ a significant Maine focus." Recent fest guests & winners of MIFF's Mid-Life Achievement Award incl. Sissy Spacek, & Terrence Malick. Founded: 1998. Cats: Feature, Short, doc. Awards: Audience Award (Best Feature). Formats: 35mm, 3/4", Beta SP, 16mm, S-VHS, 1/2", Beta, DigiBeta, DVD. Preview on VHS. Entry Fee: \$35; \$45 (final). Contact: MIFF; (207) 861-8138; fax: 872-5502; info@miff.org; www.miff.org.

MARGARET MEAD FILM & VIDEO FESTIVAL, November 11-16, NY. Deadline: April 30. Premiere US fest for nonfiction work, w/ no restrictions on subject, length, or yr. of production. Held at the American Museum of Natural History, the fest incl. forums & discussions w/ filmmakers. Founded: 1977. Cats: Short, doc, animation, experimental, student, youth media. Awards: No awards, some financial assistance & honorarium. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, Beta. Preview on VHS or DVD. Entry Fee: None. Contact: Festival; (212) 769-5305; fax: 769-5329; meadfest@amnh.org; www.amnh.org/mead.

MOONDANCE INT'L FILM FESTIVAL, May 15-18, CO. Deadline: April 1. Moondance encourages & promotes screenwriters & filmmakers. Held in Boulder, Colorado, the competition is open to all writers & indie filmmakers. Cats:

Feature, Doc, Animation, short, experimental, script, music video, student, youth media, family, children, TV, any style or genre, radio drama, puppetry theatre, lyrics & libretti, TV MOW's, TV Episodes, Stage plays. Awards: Columbine Award for film, screenplay, stage play, or short story that best depicts problems or conflicts solved in non-violent manner. Spirit of Moondance Awards (for & by women all genres & cats), Seahorse Awards (for & by men & women, all genres & cats), Dolphin Awards (for & by kids & youth). Formats: Beta SP, DVD. Preview on VHS. Entry Fee: \$25 Animation; \$50 shorts; \$75 features. Contact: Festival; (303)545-0202; moondanceeff@aol.com; www.moondancefilmfestival.com.

NANTUCKET FILM FESTIVAL, June 15-19, MA. Deadline: April 1. Fest focuses on screenwriters & their craft, presents feature films, short films, docs, staged readings, Q&A w/ filmmakers, panel discussions, the "Morning Coffee With" series, Late Night Storytelling, Teen's View on NFF Program & NBC Screenwriter's Tribute. Fest's goal is to "foster a creative film industry community of screenwriters, filmmakers, directors & producers where partnerships are formed & deals are made." Cats: any style or genre, script, short, feature. Awards: Tony Cox Award for Screenwriting Competition, Moby Dick Award for Best Screenwriting in a Feature Film & Short Film, Audience Awards for Best Feature & Short Film, Best Storytelling in a Doc Feature & Teen's View on NFF Short Film Award. Formats: 35mm, Video, 16mm, DigiBeta. Preview on VHS. Entry Fee: \$40 (features); \$25 (shorts, 35 min. or less); \$45 (screenplays). Contact: (212) 708-1278; fax: 226-5054; info@nantucketfilmfestival.org; www.nantucketfilmfestival.org.

NEXTFRAME: UFVA'S TOURING FESTIVAL OF INTERNATIONAL STUDENT FILM & VIDEO, Oct., PA. Deadline: April 30; May 31 (final). Fest was founded in 1993 to survey & exhibit the very best in current student film & video worldwide. Emphasizes independence, creativity & new approaches to visual media. All

entries must have been created by students enrolled in a college, univ., or graduate school at time of prod. & should have been completed no earlier than May of previous 2 yrs. All works prescreened by panel of film/video-makers; finalists sent to judges. About 30 works showcased each year. All works premiere at annual conference of Univ. Film & Video Assoc. (UFVA), in August. Year-long int'l tour of finalists begins after premiere. Tour travels to major universities & art centers across the US & around the globe. Past int'l venues have incl. Chile, Canada, Japan, Mexico, New Zealand & Portugal. UFVA is an int'l org. dedicated to arts & sciences of film & video & development of motion pictures as medium of communication. Founded: 1993. Cats: Doc, Experimental, Animation, Feature, student, short. Awards: Over \$15,000 in prizes; 1st & 2nd place prizes awarded in each cat plus a Director's Choice Prize. Craft competition, incl. prizes for film editing, cinematography & screenwriting. Formats: 16mm, Beta SP (NTSC), Beta SP. Preview on VHS (PAL/SECAM okay for preview only), DVD. Entry Fee: \$25; \$20 (UFVA members). Free for int'l entries. Contact: Festival; (215) 923-3532; fax: 204-6740; nextfests@temple.edu; www.temple.edu/nextframe.

OCEAN CITY FILM FESTIVAL, June 3-6, NJ. Deadline: March 1; April 1 (final). Cats: feature, doc, short, animation, student. Preview on VHS. Entry Fee: \$25-\$50. Contact: Festival; (609) 646-1640; admin@oceancityfilmfestival.com; www.oceancityfilmfestival.com.

PHILADELPHIA INT'L GAY & LESBIAN FILM FESTIVAL, July 7-18, PA. Deadline: April 23. Competitive fest screening int'l features, documentaries, & shorts, w/ cash prizes for both jury & audience awards. Cats: feature, short, doc, children. Awards: Audience Award, Best Feature (\$1,000); Audience Award, Gay Male Short (\$500); Audience Award, Lesbian Short (\$500); Jury Award, Best Feature (\$500); Jury Award, Doc (\$500); Jury Award, Lesbian Short (\$250); Jury Award, Gay Male Short (\$250). Preview on VHS. Entry Fee: None. Contact:

Festival; (215)733-0608 ext. 249; fax: 733-0668; rmurray@phillyfests.com; www.phillyfests.com.

Q CINEMA: FORT WORTH'S GAY & LESBIAN FILM FESTIVAL, May 19-22, TX. Deadline: April 15. The mission of this Festival is to provide a voice for gays, lesbians, bisexuals & transgendered persons by presenting films, videos & live programs that not only represent the diversity of our community but educate, enlighten & entertain us all. Cats: feature, doc, short. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, DVD, Digital Video, Beta SP, 1/2". Preview on VHS. Entry Fee: None. Contact: Q Cinema; (817) 462-3368; fax: 390-7257; tcamp@startelegram.com; www.qcinema.org.

REEL VENUS FILM FESTIVAL, July 20-22, NY. Deadline: April 15; May 13 (final). A showcase of Film/Video Shorts, 30 min. & under, all genres, directed & written by emerging & established women filmmakers from the United States & Abroad. Founded: 2003. Cats: any style or genre, short. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, Beta SP, DigiBeta, 1/2", DVD. Preview on VHS or DVD. Entry Fee: \$15; \$20 (final). Contact: Melissa Fowler, Festival Director; info@reelvenus.com; www.reelvenus.com.

RESFEST DIGITAL FILM FESTIVAL, Sept. - Dec., NY, CA, DC, IL, MA, OR. Deadline: April 15; May 13 (final). Annual nat'l/int'l touring fest seeks short films/videos exploring the dynamic interplay of film, art, music & design. The Fest showcases the best of the year's shorts, features, music videos, & animation along w/ screenings, live music events, parties, panel discussions, & tech demos. The underlying guideline for submissions is Innovation. The previous years the fest toured 30 plus cities int'lly. Cats: Doc, Experimental, Feature, Animation, music video, short. Awards: Audience Choice Award w/ cash prizes. Formats: DV, Beta SP, 35mm, DigiBeta (preferred), Mini DV (NTSC). Preview on VHS, DVD, Beta SP (NTSC), Mini DV (NTSC). Entry Fee: \$20; \$25 (final). Contact: Festival; filmmaker@resfest.com; www.resfest.com.

SAN DIEGO ASIAN FILM FESTIVAL, Sept. 29-Oct. 2, CA. Deadline: April 1; May 14 (final). Annual competitive fest seeks short-to feature-length narratives, docs, experimental, animation & mixed-genre works made by or about Asian & Pacific Americans. Cats: feature, doc, experimental, animation, mixed genre works, short, music video. Awards: Best Feature, Best Short, Best Doc, Best Experimental, Best Animation, Best Music Video, Jury award. Formats: 35mm, Beta SP. Preview on VHS (NTSC only). Entry Fee: \$25; \$35 (final). Contact: SDAFF; (858) 699-2717; entries@sdaff.org; www.sdaff.org.

STONY BROOK FILM FESTIVAL, July 21-30, NY. Deadline: May 2. Bringing the best in independent film to a discerning, film-loving community. Over 13,000 attending. Independent features & shorts in competition; premieres, special screenings, filmmaker panels & receptions. Cats: Feature, Short, Doc, Animation. Awards: Grand Prize, Jury Feature, Jury Short, Jury Directing, & Audience Choice Awards. Formats: 35mm, 16mm. Preview on VHS. Entry Fee: None. Contact: Alan Inkles; (631) 632-7235; fax: 632-7354; filmfestival@stonybrookfilmfestival.com; www.stonybrookfilmfestival.com.

SUBMERGE INT'L ART & ENVIRONMENT FESTIVAL, June-Oct., NY. Deadline: April 1. Fest mission is "presenting film, video & photography which reflects our concerns about our fragile aquatic environments, all about Water." Fest is presented each yr. at various venues incl. outdoor & theatrical screenings, Gallery Exhibits & Public Art Installations. Founded: 2002. Cats: any style or genre, doc, short, experimental. Awards: Best Photography; Best Subject. Formats: Mini-DV, DVD, Beta, 1/2". Preview on VHS. Entry Fee: \$20. Contact: Festival; urbandivers@urbandivers.org; www.urbandivers.org.

TELLURIDE FILM FESTIVAL, Sept. 2-5, CO. Deadline: May 1 (early), June 15 (final). Annual fest, held in a Colorado mountain town, is a Labor Day weekend celebration commemo-

rating the art of filmmaking: honoring the great masters of cinema, discovering the rare & unknown, bringing new works by the world's greatest directors & the latest in independent film. Cats: feature, short, student, any style or genre, doc, experimental. Awards: None. Formats: 16mm, 35mm, 3/4", 1/2", S-VHS, Beta, Beta SP, DigiBeta, Hi8, DV, DVD. Preview on VHS. Entry Fee: \$35 (19 min. or less); \$55 (20-39 min.); \$75 (40-59 min.); \$95 (60 min. & over); \$25 (student films, any length). Contact: Bill Pence / Tom Luddy; (603) 433-9202; fax: 433-9206; mail@telluridefilmfestival.org; www.telluridefilmfestival.org.

WOODS HOLE FILM FESTIVAL, July 30-Aug. 6, MA. Deadline: April 1; May 15 (final). A showcase for independent film w/ special emphasis on regional filmmakers & cinematography. Founded: 1991. Cats: feature, doc, short, animation, experimental, script. Awards: Best of the Fest, Best feature: drama, comedy, documentary; Short: drama, comedy, animation, documentary, experimental; Director's Choice Award for Cinematography. Formats: 16mm, 35mm, Beta SP, DVD, DigiBeta. Preview on VHS or DVD. Entry Fee: features: \$40, \$50 (final); shorts (under 40 min.): \$20, \$30 (final). Contact: JC Bouvier; (508) 495-3456; info@woodsholefilmfestival.org; www.woodsholefilmfestival.org.

ZEITGEIST INT'L FILM FESTIVAL, June 13 / July 11 / Aug. 8, CA. Deadline: April 30. ZIFF is an "irreverent" fest, held in San Fran in the backyard of the Zeitgeist Bar (seats 300). Works can be any genre "that hold the attention of the average bar patron". Cats: short (15 min or less). Formats: 16mm, 1/2", DV, DVD. Preview on VHS or DVD. Entry Fee: None. Contact: B Berzins; Call (415) 786-9967; Or email ikooking@yahoo.com; www.OverCookedCine.ma.com.

INTERNATIONAL

AFRICA IN THE PICTURE, Sept. 3-14, Netherlands. Deadline: April 15. Africa in the

picture is one of the oldest African film fests in Europe. The bi-annual fest is held in Amsterdam & a number of other cities in the Netherlands, featuring works from Africa & the African Diaspora. Founded: 1987. Cats: feature, doc, short. Preview on VHS PAL/NTSC. Entry Fee: none. Contact: Sasha Dees; (212) 864-5921; deessasha@cs.com; www.africainthepicture.nl.

ANTIMATTER: UNDERGROUND FILM FESTIVAL, Sept. 16-24, Canada. Deadline: April 15; May 31 (final). Annual int'l fest seeks "imaginative, volatile, entertaining & critical" films & videos. Antimatter is "dedicated to cinema as art vs. product, regardless of the subversive or dangerous nature of its content, stylistic concerns or commercial viability". Selected works may be included in upcoming int'l tours. Industrial, commercial & studio products ineligible. Max 30 min., completed w/in past two years. Founded: 1998. Cats: any style or genre, short. Formats: 1/2", 16mm, DVD, Mini-DV, Super 8. Preview on VHS, DVD. Entry Fee: \$10; \$20 (final). Contact: Todd Eacrett, Director; (250) 385-3327; fax: 385-3327; info@antimatter.ws; www.antimatter.ws.

INT'L FESTIVAL OF ENVIRONMENTAL CINEMA & VIDEO, May 31-June 5, Brazil. Deadline: April 15. The objective of FICA is to divulge, show, & award prizes to long, medium & short audiovisual productions, fiction, feature films or documentary, focusing on environmental issues, produced anywhere in the world. Films must be produced after Jan 1 of previous year. Founded: 1999. Cats: feature, doc, short, TV, animation. Formats: 16mm, 35mm, Beta SP. Preview on VHS or DVD. Entry Fee: None. Contact: Eudaldo Guimarães, Executive Manage; 011 55 62 229 3436; fax: 224-2642; fica@fica.art.br; www.fica.art.br.

KARLOVY VARY INT'L FILM FESTIVAL, July 1-9, Czech Republic. Deadline: April 15. Annual FIAPF-recognized competitive fest, founded in 1946. This fest is intended for lay as well as professional public & it offers to its visitors a carefully composed program, high-quality

background, & a wide amount of services. Founded: 1946. Cats: Doc, Feature, Short. Awards: Grand Prize of Crystal Globe, Special Jury Award, Best Director Prize, Best Actor/Actress & Lifetime Achievement Award. Formats: 35mm, 16mm. Preview on VHS. Entry Fee: None. Contact: KVIFF; (011) 420 221 411 011; fax: 420 221 411 033; program@kviff.com; www.kviff.com.

MELBOURNE INT'L FILM FESTIVAL, July 20-Aug. 7, Australia. Deadline: March 18 (shorts); April 15 (features). Established in 1952, the fest is the oldest established Film in the southern hemisphere & one of Australia's oldest running arts events. Screened in some of Melbourne's most celebrated cinemas & theaters, the fest comprises an eclectic mix of outstanding filmmaking from around the world. The fest is a showcase for the latest developments in Australian & int'l filmmaking, offering audiences a wide range of features & shorts, encompassing fiction, documentaries, animation & experimental films w/ a program of more than 350 films from over 40 countries. Highlights incl. the Int'l Short Film Awards, spotlights on filmmakers, genres & retros. Founded: 1952. Cats: feature, doc, animation, experimental, student, short. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, , Beta SP, DVD. Preview on VHS or DVD. Entry Fee: \$40. Contact: Juliana Chin, Program Assistant; 011 61 3 417 2011; fax: 417 3804; miff@melbournefilmfestival.com.au; www.melbournefilmfestival.com.au.

MILANO FILM FESTIVAL, September 10-19, Italy. Deadline: May 31. Annual fest invites features films & shorts (under 45 min.) from anyone who'd like to "invent, build, & destroy new ideas of cinema." Cats: any style or genre, feature, doc, short, animation, experimental, music video, student. Awards: Awards incl. Aprile Award. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, 8mm, DV, Beta SP, 1/2". Preview on VHS. Entry Fee: none. Contact: Festival; 011

39 02 713 613; info@milanofilmfestival.it; www.milanofilmfestival.it.

NICKEL INDEPENDENT FILM & VIDEO FESTIVAL, July 6-9, Canada. Deadline: March 15; April 15 (final). The fest dubs itself as a "fest created by filmmakers for filmmakers". In addition to screenings of films & videos, the fest stages actor's workshops, Q & A w/ filmmakers, showcases local theatre pieces & local music & readings. Founded: 2001. Cats: feature, doc, short, music video, any style or genre. Awards: Awards in various cats. Formats: Beta SP, 16mm. Preview on VHS or DVD. Entry Fee: \$10 (shorts); \$20 (features). Contact: Roger Maunder; (709) 722-3456; nickelfestival@yahoo.ca; www.nickelfestival.com.

PESARO FILM FESTIVAL, June 24-July 2, Italy. Deadline: May 7. Annual fest's "New Cinema" program. Production req. Italian premiere, completion after Jan. 1 of previous year. If not English or French spoken or subtitled, enclose dialogue list in either language. Founded: 1964. Cats: feature, short, doc, experimental, animation features. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, Betacam, 3/4". Preview on VHS. Entry Fee: None. Contact: Fondazione Pesaro Nuovo Cinema; 011 39 06 445 6643; fax: 49 11 63; pesarofilmfest@mcmlink.it; www.pesarofilmfest.it.

PLANET FOCUS: TORONTO ENVIRONMENTAL FILM FESTIVAL, Sept. 28-Oct. 2, Canada. Deadline: April 1; May 2. Fest pays special consideration to works that push the boundaries of the accepted notions of 'environment'; works that present cultural perspectives that are under-represented in Canada & works that will have their world or Canadian premiere at fest. Cats: any style or genre. Entry Fee: \$15; \$20 (final). Contact: Festival; (416) 531-1769; info@planetinfocus.org; www.planetinfocus.org.

SPICE THIS! THE TORONTO ANNUAL SUPER 8 FILM FESTIVAL, June 17-19, Canada. Deadline: April 15. Non-competitive fest dedicated to the exhibition of small gauge films, showcasing a wide range of work by first-time filmmakers & seasoned super-eighters. All entries must be shot on Super 8. Video will be screened only if original print isn't avail. or if the film was edited on video. 16mm blow-ups of super 8 are also considered. Cats: any style or genre. Formats: super 8, silent super 8, super 8 w/ live accompaniment, super 8 w/ sound, super8 w/ audiocassette, Super 8 work on: 1/2", DVD, Mini-DV. Preview on VHS. Entry Fee: \$5. Contact: Festival; splicethis@yahoo.com; www.splicethis.com.

SUNNY SIDE OF THE DOC MARKET, June 29-July 2, France. Deadline: April 15. Annual market brings together ind. producers, distributors, commissioning editors, heads of TV programming depts & buyers from all over the world. Attended by some 539 co. from 35 countries, 183 buyers & commissioning editors & 120 TV channels. Market provides ops for project development & meeting partners w/ Side-by-Side sessions. Founded: 1990. Cats: doc. Preview on VHS. Contact: Pôle Média Belle de Mai; 011 33 4 95 04 44 80; fax: 33 4 91 84 38 34; email contact@sunnysideofthedoc.com; www.sunnysideofthedoc.com.

WELLINGTON FILM FESTIVAL/AUCKLAND INT'L FILM FESTIVAL, July, New Zealand. Deadline: Mid April. Noncompetitive fest, w/ a core program of 120 features (& as many shorts), fest simultaneously presents Auckland & Wellington Film Festivals & programs that travel to cities of Dunedin & Christchurch & other cities throughout New Zealand. Founded: 1972. Cats: Feature, Short. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, Beta SP. Preview on VHS. Entry Fee: None. Contact: Bill Gosden; 011 64 4 385 0162; fax: 801 7304; entries@nzff.co.nz; www.nzff.co.nz.

CLASSIFIEDS

By Michael Tierno

Deadline: First of each month, two months prior to cover date (e.g., Sept. 1st for Nov. issue). Contact (212) 807-1400, x241, fax (212) 463-8519; classifieds@aivf.org per issue cost: 0-240 characters (incl. spaces & punctuation): \$45 for nonmembers/\$30 for AIVF members; 241-360 chars: \$65/\$45; 361-480 chars: \$80/\$60; 481-600 chars: \$95/\$75; over 600 characters: Call for quote. (212) 807-1400, x241. Frequency discount: \$5 off per issue for ads running 5+ times. Ads exceeding the specified length will be edited. Place ad at www.aivf.org/independent/classifieds or type copy and mail with the check or money order to: AIVF, 304 Hudson St., 6th Fl., New York, NY 10013. Include billing address, daytime phone, # of issues, and valid member ID# for member discount. To pay by VISA/MC/AMEX include card #, name on card and expiration date.

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MISCELLANEOUS

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By Lindsay Gelfand

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COMPETITIONS

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seeks submissions. Entry fee \$40. Grand Prize - \$2000 Option, First Prize \$750—All winners will also receive screenwriting-related books, materials and or software. Special Cash Award for Regional Writer to be awarded to a South Coast Resident (Santa Barbara, Ventura, San Luis Obispo counties in California). Regular submission deadline is June 30th and late is July 31. Contact: Geoff@santabarbarascript.com or visit www.santabarbarascript.com.

BUSINESS FILMS ELAN

announces new screenplay contest: The India Screen 2005 \$500 - \$1000 Short & Feature Screenplay Contest. Deadline: April 30, 2005. Entry is free and winning films will be slotted for production. For more information and submission guidelines, please go to: www.businessfilm.com/businessfilme/elan.html.

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has established several ongoing sponsorship, grant and scholarship programs, including: Undergraduate Scholarship Program awarding up to \$5000 in scholarships to undergraduate students majoring in television, film and related media fields, the NYU Heinemann Award of \$10,000 to an outstanding film/video senior undergraduate at New York University, a USC Post Production Award of an annual \$10,000 award toward the completion of an outstanding film/video project by a graduate student in the MFA program at the University of Southern California, and the UCLA Post Production Award, giving an annual \$10,000 award toward the completion of an outstanding film/video project by a graduate student in the MFA program at the University of California, Los Angeles. Deadline: April 15, 2005. For more information, visit: www.kingfoundation.org.

THE FUND FOR JEWISH DOCUMENTARY FILM-MAKING offers grants up to \$50,000 for



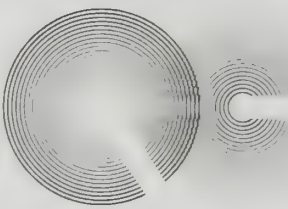
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completion of original doc films & videos that interpret Jewish history, culture & identity to diverse public audiences. Applicants must be U.S. citizens or permanent residents. Priority given to works-in-progress addressing critical issues, can be completed within 1 year of award & have broadcast potential. Deadline April 5, 2005. For more information, visit: www.jewisculature.org

MICROCINEMAS SCREENINGS

CINEMARENO a year-round festival of films. Monthly screenings showcase independent films and videos. Formats: 16mm, Beta-SP, Mini-DV. Preview on VHS or DVD. Entry fee: \$20; fee waived for AIVF members. Entry form & instructions at www.cinemareno.org. Contact: Cinemareno, PO Box 5372, Reno, NV 89513. Entry form and guidelines at: www.cinemareno.org.

MICROCINEMA'S INDEPENDENT EXPOSURE

2005, an ongoing microcinema screening program of international short films, videos & digital works has been presented hundreds of times in 35 countries and Antarctica and 2005 is its tenth season. Seeking short video, film & digital media submissions of 15 min. or fewer on an ongoing basis for the ongoing screening and touring program. Artists qualify for a nonexclusive distribution deal, incl. additional license fees for DVD sales. Looking for short narrative, alternative, humorous, dramatic, erotic, animation, etc. Works selected may continue on to nat'l & int'l venues for additional screenings. Submit DVD or VHS (NTSC/PAL) labeled w/ name, title, length, phone # & any support materials, incl. photos. Submissions will not be returned. Contact: Joel S. Bachar, Microcinema International, 531 Utah St.,

San Francisco, CA 94110; info@microcinema.com; www.microcinema.com.

TOURING PROGRAMS

FREE FORM FILM FESTIVAL is a year-round touring event created by loaf-i.com and inner mission productions is now taking submissions. Seeking films/videos of all formats and genres (but please submit on NTSC VHS for initial consideration). The FFFF brings an eclectic collection of innovative films to cities and towns across the United States. Enter now to be considered for our West Coast tour in September. Enter anytime for other tours/exhibitions. The FFFF is non-competitive, but offers opportunity for screenings all over the U.S. Entry fee is \$15 for residents of the U.S. and Canada. There is no entry fee for residents of other countries. See freeform film.org for details and entry forms.

BROADCASTS CABLECASTS

IMAGEMAKERS is a half-hour program airing in San Francisco (PBS) that features the best short films from around the world. Prefer shorts between 2 min and 25 min. No experimental or docs. Prefer shorts shot on 35mm, 24p or in letterbox. Submit on VHS or DVD. Send to: Scott Dwyer, KQED-TV 2601 Mariposa Street, San Francisco, CA 94110-1426. Visit web site at www.kqed.org/imagemakers.

THE SHORT LIST. Weekly, half-hour international short film series on PBS and cable now licensing for 13th season. Considers shorts 30 secs. to 19 mins. Send DVD screener with application form downloaded from www.theshortlist.cc or email shortlist@mail.sdsu.edu.



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WORK WANTED

By Lindsay Gelfand

Noncommercial notices are listed free of charge as space permits. *The Independent* reserves the right to edit for length and makes no guarantees about duration of listing. Limit submissions to 60 words and indicate how long your information will be current. Listings must be submitted to notices@avf.org by the first of the month two months prior to cover date (e.g., Sept. 1 for Nov. issue). Remember to give us complete contact info (name, address, and phone number). Listings do not constitute an endorsement by *The Independent* or AVF. We try to be as current and accurate as possible, but nevertheless, double-check details before sending anyone anything.

AQUARIUS HEALTH CARE MEDIA is expanding our list of quality award winning videos/DVD's on Life Challenges. We have a strong interest in programs on aging, caregiving, teen/youth issues, disabilities, chronic disease, complementary therapies and mental health issues. Visit www.aquariusproductions.com and email brief synopses to lbk@aquariusproductions.com or contact Aquarius Health Care Videos at 888-440-2963, 18 No Main St. Sherborn, MA 01770.

ASOLO ART FILM FESTIVAL seeks entries by May 20, 2005 that fit into the following five categories: films on art, artists' live, auteur cinema: the challenge of eroticism, videoart-computer art, and productions. Please send submissions with entry form, filmography, slides and synopsis to AsoloArtFilmFestival, Foresto Vecchio, 8, 31011 Asolo [TV] Italy. Email info@asolofilmfestival.it or visit www.asolofilmfestival.it for more information.

BALAGAN EXPERIMENTAL FILM/VIDEO SERIES is accepting short (30 minutes or

less) films (16mm, super8) and videos (3/4, miniDV, VHS, BETA SP or DVD). Feel free to submit a compilation tape with several works as long as the tape is labeled with all titles, lengths, etc. There is no submission fee. There is no date of production requirement but we prefer to screen contemporary works. Submit a VHS (NTSC or PAL) tape clearly labeled and include any support materials, filmmaker's bio, photos and SASE if you would like your tape to be returned, to: Balagan Experimental Film and Video Series C/O Alla Kovgan 88 Winslow Ave., #2 Somerville, MA 02144 or email balagan@rcn.com for more info.

BOXCAR, a screening series held every two months at the Detroit Film Center, is currently seeking submissions of short experimental and documentary work. Send submissions on mini DV along with a 2-3 sentence synopsis. There is no form or entry fee. Send work to: Detroit Film Center, c/o Boxcar, 1227 Washington Blvd. Detroit, MI 48226. Please include SASE for return of tape. boxcarcinema@hotmail.com.

CELLULOID SOCIAL CLUB is a monthly screening series in Vancouver featuring the best in independent provocative short & feature films & videos followed by fun & frolic. Hosted by Ken Hegan at the ANZA Club, #3 West 8th Ave., Vancouver, BC. No minors. Prizes galore. For more info call (604) 730-8090 or email celluloid@shaw.ca; www.CelluloidSocialClub.com.

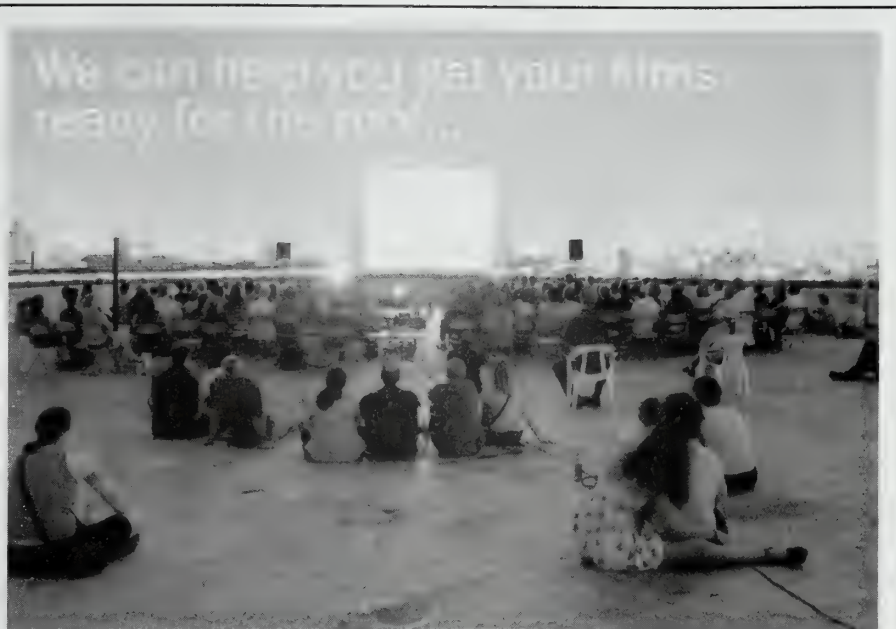
DREAM SERIES: Seeks challenging social-issue documentaries that promote frank community discussions about issues of racial prejudice and social injustice that fall under the Martin Luther King, Jr., legacy. Selected works are screened for this ongoing monthly series at the MLK National Historic Site in Atlanta, GA, and promoted, listed, and reviewed in local print. Formats: VHS, Beta. Send non returnable VHS screeners to Exhibitions Curator IMAGE Film & Video Center 535 Means Street, NW, Suite C Atlanta, Georgia 30318 or visit www.imagefv.org for more info.

FLICKER CHAPEL HILL is a film festival that



holds bi-monthly screenings at the Cat's Cradle in Carrboro, North Carolina. Now accepting short super 8, 8mm, 16mm, and 35mm films that originate on film and are less than 15 min. long [Pixelvision films also accepted]. There is no entry fee! Please send your VHS, DVD or Print to: Flicker Film Festival 706 Davie Road, Carrboro, NC 27510. Please include synopsis, bio, contact info, a description of original shooting format, length, and any production stills. Please visit www.flickerfilmfestival.com for complete guidelines.

INDIEEXPOSURE is a new festival designed to build an ongoing open network for independent film professionals and "enthusiasts." The goal is to provide opportunities for great filmmakers to showcase their work, while offering film buffs more variety and easier access to a broader independent film community. I.E. will sponsor screenings of select films on a monthly basis at a local Los Angeles theatre. For submission procedure, email IndieExposure@verizon.net and type "SUBMISSION" in the subject line.



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ROOFTOP FILMS

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* Festival * Curated Programs * Education * Equipment Rentals *

MADCAT seeks provocative and visionary films and videos directed or co-directed by women. Films can be of any length or genre and produced ANY year. MadCat is committed to showcasing work that challenges the use of sound and image and explores notions of visual story telling. All subjects/topics will be considered. Submission Fee: \$10-30 sliding scale. Pay what you can afford. For an entry form and more details go to www.madcatfilmfestival.org or call 415 436-9523. Preview Formats: VHS or DVD. Exhibition Formats: 35mm, 16mm, Super8, Beta SP, Mini DV, VHS. All entries must include a SASE for return of materials. Early Deadline: March 25, 2005. Final Deadline: May 13, 2005.

MIDWEST PRODUCTION GROUP'S INDIE FILM CAFE seeks independent films of all subjects and styles. Strongly encourage short films ten minutes and less, but features and shorts longer than ten minutes will also be accepted. Please contact Kathryn Kocitvongsa, Director of Public Relations: 313-590-7309 or email info@indiefilmcafe.net for the submission form and guidelines.

REELBLACK PRESENTS is a Philadelphia-based film and video showcase designed to promote, develop and nurture an audience for quality African-American film. We're currently looking for recent Features, Shorts & Docs by and/or about Black Folks. No entry fee. Please send




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(non-returnable) VHS or DVD screeners w/ press kit to REELBLACK, P.O. Box 12302 Philadelphia, PA 19119. For more info contact Miked@reelblack.com.

STREET MOVIES! is a year-round screening series presented by Philadelphia's Scribe Video Center. Free series tours Philly neighborhoods throughout the year & offers a program of indy cinema to the general public w/ a forum for dialogue. Prefer social issue, thought provoking work of any genre or style as well as kid-friendly pieces. Must be under 60 mins. & will receive an honorarium if selected. Founded: 1997. Send 1/2" VHS or DVD w/ synopsis and contact info. Contact: Phil Rothberg, Program Coordinator; 215-222-4201; email stmovies@scribe.org; www.scribe.org.

T 2005 TAURI FILM FESTIVAL, a division of Ozark Foothills FilmFest, is open to filmmakers age 18 and under. Entries will be judged by peer panels at three grade levels: 4-6, 7-9, and 10-12. Entries are being sought in the following categories: narrative, documentary, music video, public service message, and animation/experimental. Awards will be given for the best film at each grade level in each category. Award-winners and other films selected by the judges will be included in a "Best of T Tauri" regional touring program. VHS or DVD formatted entries should be sent to T Tauri Film Festival, 195 Peel Road,



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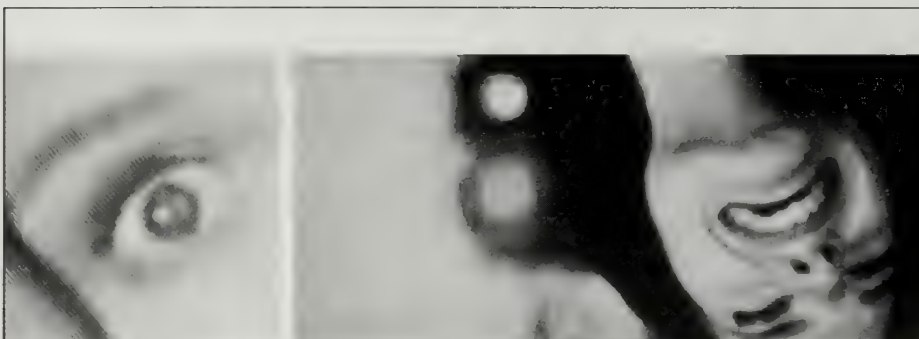
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MadCat Film Festival

639 Steiner Street, San Francisco CA 94117-2509 USA

D. 4154369523 e/ info@madcatfilmfestival.org

Locust Grove AR 72550 by May 1, 2005.
Additional information is available: film-fest@direcway.com or call 870-251-1189.

URBAN MEDIAMAKERS ASSOCIATION is seeking all genres and languages (subtitled in English) for the 2005 Quarterly Indie Cinema Night Series — action, animation, horror, sci-fi, children, drama, documentaries, comedies, music videos, TV shows, and new media. Submissions are free and include audience evaluations and an opportunity for your film to be showcased on public television in Atlanta, Georgia, Decatur, Georgia, Canton, Georgia, Charlotte, North Carolina, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, Washington, DC, Chicago, Illinois, and Miami, Florida. Please mail a VHS/DVD copy of your film and include a synopsis of the film, length of film, a short bio and resume of the director/producer/writer. Also include press materials if they are available. Submit to Urban Mediamakers Association, Attention: Indie Cinema Night, P.O. Box 50435, Atlanta, Georgia 30302. There are no submissions fees. Please direct questions to 770.345.8048 or aumai@urbanmediamakers.com. Visit our web site at www.urbanmediamakers.com.

YOUNG URBAN MEDIAMAKERS (YUMS).

The Urban Mediamakers Association has an ongoing program for youth ages 13-19 focusing on animation, film, music, television and video. We're seeking enthusiastic youth in Atlanta, Georgia and Charlotte, North Carolina for this program, which includes a 6-week Summer program that partners youth with media professionals to allow participating youth to write, produce, and screen their independent film projects. For more information, contact the YUMs at yum@urbanmediamakers.com or call 770.345.8048.



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Visit www.aivf.org/regional for an overview of the broad variety of Regional Salon programs.

The AIVF Regional Salons provide an opportunity for members to discuss work, meet other independents, share war stories, and connect with the AIVF community across the country

ALBANY/TROY, NY:

UPSTATE INDEPENDENTS

When: First Tuesdays, 6:30 p.m.

Where: Bulmer Telecommunications Center, Hudson Valley Community College, 80 Vandenburg Ave., Troy, NY

Contact: Jeff Burns, (518) 366-1538
albany@aivf.org

ATLANTA, GA:

IMAGE

When: Second Tuesdays, 7 p.m.

Where: Atlanta Contemporary Art Center, 353 Means Street

Contact: Sonia Vassell, (404) 352-4225 x20
atlanta@aivf.org; www.imagefv.org

CHARLESTON, SC:

When: Last Thursdays, 6:30 p.m.

Where: Charleston County Library
68 Calhoun Street

Contact: Peter Paolini, (843) 805-6841; or Peter Wentworth, charleston@aivf.org

CLEVELAND, OH:

OHIO INDEPENDENT FILM FESTIVAL

Contact: Annetta Marion or Bernadette Gillota, (216) 651-7315

cleveland@aivf.org; www.ohiofilms.com

COLUMBIA, SC:

When: Second Sundays

Where: Art Bar, 1211 Park St.

Contact: Wade Sellers, (803) 929-0066
columbia@aivf.org

DALLAS, TX:

VIDEO ASSOCIATION OF DALLAS

When: Bi-monthly

Contact: Bart Weiss, (214) 428-8700
dallas@aivf.org

EDISON, NJ:

Where: Passion River Productions, 190 Lincoln Hwy.

Contact: Allen Chou, (732) 321-0711
edison@aivf.org; www.passionriver.com

FORT WAYNE, IN:

Contact: Erik Mollberg
(260) 691-3258; fortwayne@aivf.org

HOUSTON, TX:

SWAMP

When: Last Tuesdays, 6:30 p.m.

Where: 1519 West Main

Contact: Mary Lampe, (713) 522-8592
houston@aivf.org

HUNTSVILLE, AL:

Contact: Charles White, (256) 895-0423
huntsville@aivf.org

JEFFERSON COUNTY, AL:

Contact: Paul Godby, (205) 956-3522
jeffersoncounty@aivf.org

LINCOLN, NE:

NEBRASKA INDEPENDENT FILM PROJECT

When: Second Wednesdays, 5:30 p.m.

Where: Telepro, 1844 N Street

Contact: Jared Minary, lincoln@aivf.org,
(402) 467-1077, www.nifp.org

LOS ANGELES, CA:

When: Third Mondays, 7:30 p.m.

Where: EZTV, 18th Street arts Center, 629 18th St., #6, Santa Monica

Contact: Michael Masucci
(310) 829-3389; losangeles@aivf.org

MILWAUKEE, WI:

MILWAUKEE INDEPENDENT FILM SOCIETY

When: First Wednesdays, 7 p.m.

Where: Milwaukee Enterprise Center, 2821 North 4th, Room 140

Contact: Laura Gembolis, (414) 688-2375
milwaukee@aivf.org; www.mifs.org/salo

NASHVILLE, TN

Where: See www.naivf.com for events

Contact: Stephen Lackey, nashville@aivf.org

PORTLAND, OR:

Where: Hollywood Theatre

Contact: David Bryant, (503) 244-4225
portland@aivf.org

ROCHESTER, NY:

Where: Visual Studies Workshop

Contact: Liz Lehmann
(585) 377-1109; rochester@aivf.org

SAN DIEGO, CA:

When: Monthly

Where: Media Arts Center, 921 25th Street

Contact: Ethan van Thillo (619) 230-1938
sandiego@aivf.org

SAN FRANCISCO, CA:

Contact: Kathy Vaguilar

(510) 482-3484; sanfrancisco@aivf.org

SEATTLE, WA:

SEATTLE INDIE NETWORK

When: Bi-monthly

Where: Wiggly World and 911 Media Arts Center

Contact: Andrea Mydlarz, Fiona Orway;
seattle@aivf.org

TUCSON, AZ:

Contact: Jana Segal, (520) 906-7295
tucson@aivf.org

WASHINGTON, DC:

Contact: DC Salon hotline,
(202) 661-7145, washingtondc@aivf.org

THANK YOU

The Association of Independent Video and Filmmakers (AIVF) provides a wide range of programs and services for independent moving image makers and the media community, including *The Independent* and a series of resource publications, seminars and workshops, information services, and arts and media policy advocacy.

None of this work would be possible without the generous support of the AIVF membership and the following organizations:

We also wish to thank the following individuals and organizational members:



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NONPROFIT MEMBERS: AR: Henderson State University; AZ: Pan Left Productions; CA: Bay Area Video Coalition; California Newsreel; Everyday Gandhis Project; Film Arts Foundation; International Buddhist Film Festival; NALIP; New Images Productions; Sundance Institute; USC School of Cinema and TV; CO: Denver Center Media; Free Speech TV; CT: Film Fest New Haven; Hartley Film Foundation; DC: American University School of Communication; CINE; Gaea Foundation; FL: Miami International Film Festival; University of Tampa; GA: Image Film and Video Center; HI: Pacific Islanders in Communications; IL: Art Institute of Chicago (Video Data Bank); Community Television Network; Department of Communication/NLU; Kartemquin Films; IN: Fort Wayne Cinema Center; KY: Appalshop; Paducah Film Society; MA: CCTV; Documentary Educational Resources; Harvard University, OsCLibrary; LTC; MD: 7 Oils Production; Laurel Cable Network; Silverdocs; AFI Discovery Channel Doc Festival; ME: Maine Photographic Workshop; MI: Ann Arbor Film Festival; MN: IFP/MSP; Walker Art Center; MO: Webster University Film Series; MS: Magnolia Independent Film Festival; NC: Calcalorus Film Foundation; Duke University, Film & Video Dept.; University of North Carolina, Dept. of Broadcast and Cinema; UNC, Wilmington; NE: Nebraska Independent Film Project/AIVF Salon Lincoln; Ross Media Center, UN-Lincoln; NJ:

Black Maria Film Festival; Capriole Productions; Freedom Film Society, Inc.; Princeton University, Program in Visual Arts; NM: Girls Film School; University of New Mexico; NY: ActNow Productions; Arts Engine; Cornell Cinema; Council for Positive Images, Inc.; Creative Capital Foundation; Crowing Rooster Arts; Educational Video Center; Experimental Television Center; Film Forum; Film Society of Lincoln Center; Firelight Media; Hourglass Group; International Film Seminars; LMC-TV; Manhattan Neighborhood Network; Melted.org; National Black Touring Circuit; National Black Programming Consortium; National Museum of the American Indian; National Video Resources; New York University, Cinema Studies; New York Women in Film and Television; Parnassus Works; POV/The American Documentary; RIT School of Film and Animation; School of Visual Arts, Film Department; Squeaky Wheel; Standby Program; Stonestreet Studios Film and TV Acting Workshop; Stony Brook Film Festival; Syracuse University; Upstate Films, Ltd.; Witness; Women Make Movies; OH: Athens Center for Film And Video; Independent Pictures/AIVF Ohio Salon; Media Bridges Cincinnati; School of Film, Ohio University; Wexner Center; Northeast Film Center; The Oregon Film & Video Foundation; PA: American Poetry Center; Philadelphia Independent Film & Video Assoc. (PIFVA); Pittsburgh Filmmakers; Scribe Video Center; TeamChildren.com; RI: Flickers Arts Collaborative; SC: South Carolina Arts Commission; TN: Indie Memphis Film Festival; TX: Austin Film Society; Southwest Alternate Media Project; UT: Sundance Institute; WA: Seattle Central Community College; Thurston Community Television; Canada: Banff Centre Library; RIDM; France: The Carmago Foundation

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THE LIST

FROM THE BOTTOM UP

By Lindsay Gelfand

The strong grassroots sentiments that founded AIVF are as prevalent as ever—and according to this month's featured filmmakers, as varied as ever. We asked filmmakers to share with us the grassroots media effort that most affected them or their career.

"I would say having a small Texas town pull support for production one day before shooting—due to gay content—is a surefire way to get front page news. It's not something that we planned, but something so drastic, that hurt our production, is going to help us in the long run."

—Kim Fishman, producer, *Fat Girls*

"I would have to say that the work of Joelle Ruby Ryan, a local transgender scholar, writer, and activist, has most informed my desire to bring about change in the world through the use of film. In creating *Transamazon, A Genderqueer Journey*, I witnessed first-hand her courage and bravery in fighting bigotry, intolerance, hate, and violence against people who don't fit the cookie cutter gender mold in our culture. I now see transgendered people as the most evolved spirits on the planet."

—Peter Welch, editor, *Transamazon, A Genderqueer Journey*

"The digital revolution and the willingness on the part of many film festivals and venues to show digital media has tremendously affected my artistry and career. When digital technology became accessible, I made my first film, a feature called *Robin's Hood*, and it played at over 50 film festivals on five continents, all for under \$17,000. Most of the post-production done in my own living room."

—Sara Millman, writer/director, *Filmworks7*

"My answer would definitely be POWER UP, the Professional Organization of Women in Entertainment Reaching UP, a nonprofit organization which has a film production program that is run entirely by volunteers."

—Lisa Thrasher, producer

"It's the kind folks at Frameline in San Francisco. The organization coordinates the largest film festival in the state of

California, the San Francisco International Lesbian & Gay Film Festival, and the largest and oldest of its kind worldwide. It is their effort that is responsible for the international global connection of queer film festivals worldwide, more than 100 to date, and has proven to broadcasters, exhibitors, and other film distributors (including the CFMDC) that gay is the way."

—Jeff Crawford, festivals officer for the Canadian Filmmakers Distribution Center in Toronto

"The United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women in China, 1995. Over 40,000 grassroots women from across the globe came together in one place to focus on women and girls' rights. I was there shooting a documentary. Media access and education were identified as absolute necessities for women's equality. I came home, finished the tape, and founded our organization."

—Salome Chasnoff, media artist/activist/executive director, Beyondmedia

"The word is out. Without a doubt the growing acceptance and interest in the voices of out gay filmmakers has really helped launch my career. Because of Network/Cable TV and Broadway, through gay marriage headlines, the unique POV of a LGBT minority is getting a chance to play to a broader worldwide audience."

—David M. Young, director/producer/writer/editor, *Looking For Mr. Right*

"Probably the Robert Rodriguez film, *El Mariachi*. There was such a street buzz about how his career in film was launched by a \$7,000 movie. I had just started NYU Film School and thought, 'I can do this.'"

—Brent Sterling Nemetz, writer/director, Sterling Films, Ltd.



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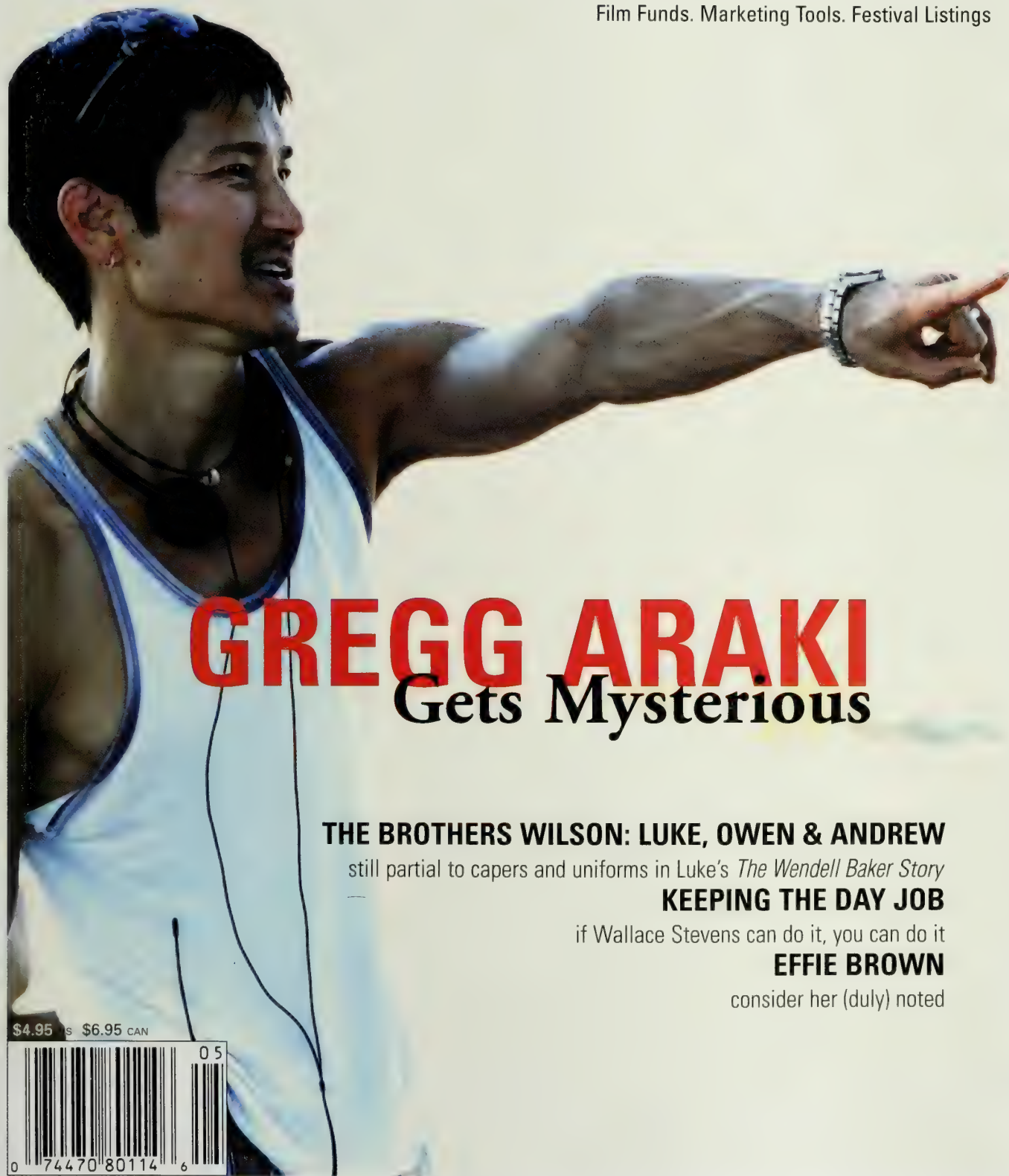
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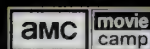
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"National exposure, viewer feedback, cachet in film circles, and, yes, money that can help pay off production costs are some of the benefits of having a film selected by TV's longest-running nonfiction film series." —Bill Keveney, USA Today

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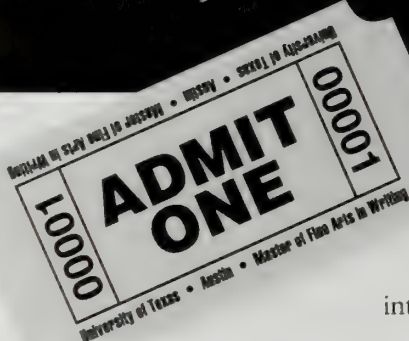
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EDITOR'S LETTER

Dear Readers,

As the magazine's aesthetic continues to change in subtle but significant ways, I'd like to bring to your attention one such change. You may notice that on the cover, rather than calling ourselves *The Independent Film & Video Monthly*, we are now going simply by *The Independent*, with the tagline "a magazine for video and filmmakers" (lest we be mistaken for *The Independent* out of London—yeah, that'll happen), which we feel connects us more to our parent organization, the Association of Independent Video and Filmmakers, as we should be, and is also a bit less newsletter-sounding.

This issue also introduces a new section called "UTILIZE IT"—an in-brief look at newsworthy items and new equipment that may come in handy to you right now. And with it comes a new contributing editor, David Alm, who also writes frequently for *The Independent*. And next month we'll add a "Members in the News" page for outstanding AIVF member announcements and achievements—see your latest issue of *SPLICE!* for how to submit your announcement.

Because I get so much great information about independent film work being done out there that may not fit the current theme issue and also because I always tout *The Independent* as a magazine about "the culture of independent film," twice a year (most likely May and June) we will focus on independent film in general. This issue you are reading now is one such general issue.

I saw Gregg Araki's *Mysterious Skin* (out this month from Tartan Films) at Sundance earlier this year and was blown away—it was

so powerful, quiet, and strangely gentle, even despite scenes featuring graphic sexual violence. Just a beautiful, if somewhat unsettling film. Lisa Selin Davis talked to Araki about the film, his moral center, and his freak-filled filmmaking career (page 32).

Most of us who are passionate about writing, art, filmmaking—anything remotely creative—have had to hold down a job we didn't like at one time or another in order to pay the bills. Although some people (like, say, my parents) just do the artist thing straight up and hope they don't ever get sick or break a bone (or fall prey to any other fate where health and medical insurance would be really, really helpful), others either can't stand the risk or are just fairly pragmatic folks who believe in having insurance and paying the rent. Freelance writer David Roth talked to some of those folks in his piece, "Keeping the Day Job" (page 36), and discovered that living in a cold, dark garret subsisting on bread and water may be totally passé, but working for a living is no small feat. "You can be the most motivated person in the world and it's still going to be difficult," says Kate Bernstein, filmmaker, VH1 producer, and freelance writer, who writes for this publication and has a piece in this issue ("Effie Brown," page 40).

Also in this issue, Xan Cassavette's *Z Channel: A Magnificent Obsession*, and why IFC is the perfect home for this documentary about the legendary cable channel out of LA run by Jerry Harvey in the late 70s and early 80s (page 28). Our beloved Doc Doctor, Fernanda Rossi, answers perpetually relevant questions about how to tackle the behemoth that is the film industry, while staying independent and true to yourself as a filmmaker (page 14). Former Miramax script consultant, Maureen Nolan, demythologizes film development executives (page 16); and I sat down with Luke Wilson at the SXSW Film Festival in March, where his feature film, *The Wendell Baker Story* premiered, and badgered him like an obsessed fan about the brilliance of *Bottle Rocket* (page 19).

Enjoy, and thanks for reading
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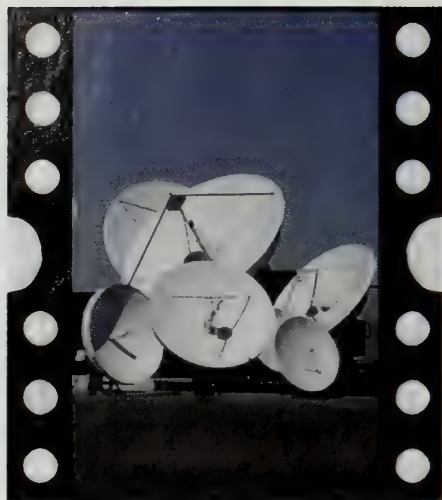
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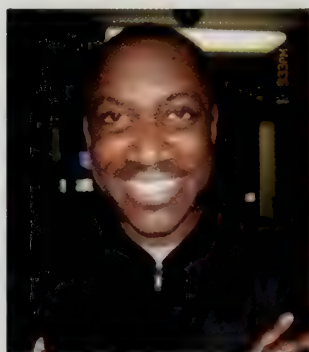
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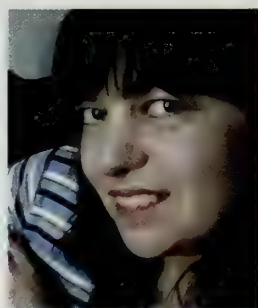


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DAVID ALM teaches film history and writing at two colleges in Chicago. His writing has appeared in *Artbyte*, *CameraWork*, *RES*, *Silicon Alley Reporter*, *SOMA*, and *The Utne Reader*. He's also contributed to books on web design and digital filmmaking and assisted in making documentaries about architecture and garbage.



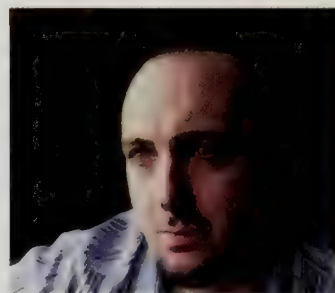
NICHOLAS BOSTON writes about media and culture for various publications. He is an assistant professor of journalism and mass communications at Lehman College of the City University of New York.



SARAH COLEMAN is books editor of *Planet* magazine and writes on the arts for various publications. She has an MFA in fiction writing from Columbia University and hopes to put it to use some

day soon. Her journalism has appeared in *New York Newsday*, *The San Francisco Chronicle*, *Salon*, and *The Boston Phoenix*, among others.

LISA SELIN DAVIS is the author of the novel, *Belly*, forthcoming from Little, Brown & Co., and a freelance writer in New York.



CHRIS DELEO grew up in Ozone Park, New York, and earns his living as a professional magician, performing for private clients and exclusive clubs. He always dreamed about making a film, but it wasn't until his late twenties that he saw an opportunity in his friend, Neal Hecker. He started filming in 1997, completing the project in 2000. He is currently outlining a John Cassavettes-style film and hopes one day to convince Sara Gilbert to take the leading role.

TUTORS

MAUREEN A. NOLAN is a script, story, and creative consultant who works with writers and filmmakers on story development, script doctoring, and rewrites. Her background includes eight years as a top script and story analyst for Miramax Films. She has also worked as an analyst for HBO and Columbia Tristar Television, and has served as resource consultant for scripts for the IFP's Resource Consultant Panel. She holds an MFA in dramatic writing from New York University. Recently, she was the industry mentor for the AIVF Screenwriter Mentorship Program.

FERNANDO RAMIREZ is an attorney in private practice in New York City, where he lives with his wife and 12-year-old son/aspiring doc-maker. Mr. Ramirez graduated from Fordham University, and earned his law degree from Brooklyn Law School. His work involves transactional entertainment law; he drafts, reviews, and/or negotiates industry agreements, and advises on copyright, trademark, contracts, privacy, and business formation matters for independent filmmakers, executive producers, media personalities, singer/songwriters, personal managers, independent labels, and nonprofit film organizations.

FERNANDA ROSSI, known as the Documentary Doctor, is a filmmaker and story consultant who helps filmmakers craft the story structure of their films in all stages of the filmmaking process. She has doctored over 100 documentaries and fiction scripts and is the author of *Trailer Mechanics: A Guide to Making your Documentary Fundraising Trailer*. For more info: www.documentarydoctor.com.



DAVID ROTH is a writer from New Jersey who lives in New York. His day job is in the baseball card business, and his nonfiction has appeared in *The New Republic Online*, *McSweeney's.net*, *The Green Magazine* and *Fly*. His short story "The Other Woman" appears in *Post Road #10*.



AMY THOMAS has forever been an indie movie fan, even though this is her first assignment for *The Independent*. The founder of *modgirl.com*, Amy has written about everything from digital photography to chocolate soufflés for magazines such as *Lucky*, *Time Out New York*, *CITY* and *Weddingbells*.

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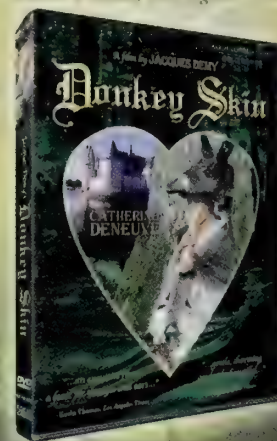
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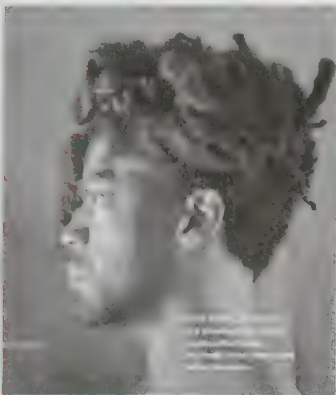
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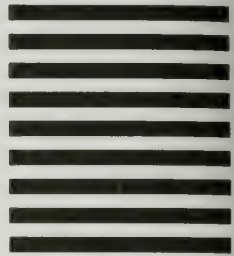
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NEWS

Featured Firsts

Capturing the voice and vision of indigenous filmmakers

By Amy Thomas



Evan Adams (foreground) with Adam Beach in the 1998 *Smoke Signals*—which opens First Nations/First Features at the MoMA (Jill Sabella/Miramax)

Most people (and certainly this magazine's readers) are aware that moviemaking is dominated by Hollywood. Mega budgets and proven directors and flashy marketing and spin rule the game that puts films on the big screen. It's rare that a good foreign film comes to the local cineplex, much less a movie made by an indigenous filmmaker like the Zapotec from Mexico or New Zealand's Maori. Thankfully, this is something that three prestigious institutions decided it was time to change.

From May 11-22, The Museum of Modern Art, the Smithsonian National Museum of the American Indian

(NMAI), and the New York University Center for Media, Culture and History are bringing a showcase of more than 20 films by indigenous filmmakers to New York City and Washington, DC. The program, titled First Nations/First Features, launches in New York at the recently expanded MoMA and will remain there until moving south to DC on the 18th. It's a forum that celebrates feature-length films (and a handful of shorts) of indigenous directors from communities like Inuit, Maori, Native North and South American, Nenet, and others, and will collectively offer entertainment, inspiration, and overdue recognition.

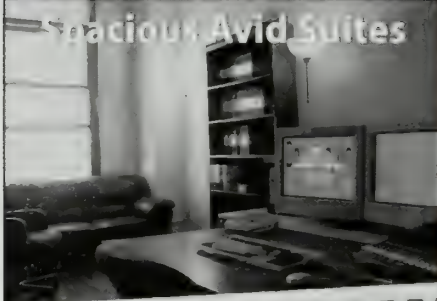
"We all felt that this work deserved wider attention — the mainstream attention," said MoMA's Sally Berger, who organized the program with Faye Ginsburg, director of the Center for Media, Culture and History at NYU, Elizabeth Weatherford from NMAI, and independent curator Pegi Vail. "We came up with the idea knowing that people didn't know about this work." Each of the collaborators, though, has had a long-standing interest in and involvement with the indigenous genre. Now, about three years after first coming up with the idea for the showcase, they're thrilled to be sharing the films with a larger audience.



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"The program fell into place because we were looking at this notion of 'firsts,'" Berger said. In addition to first features made by the director and/or indigenous group, the organizers sought films that represented groundbreaking work and different landmarks in indigenous production. Because the highlighted films were firsts, some date as far back as the 80s, such as Norway's *The Pathfinder*—that nation's first Lapp-language feature film—and *Itam Hakim Hopiit* from the United States, which celebrates Hopi Tricentennial.

In more recent years, works by a younger generation have been meeting with increased mainstream success. *Two Cars, One Night*, directed by Maori New Zealander Taika Waititi, tells the story of two boys and a girl who begin a friendship in the parking lot of a motel bar. This past year, it became the first Maori-made Academy Award-nominated short film. It will be presented with a film from Australia's Ivan Sen—a "wonderful up and coming director" according to Berger—called *Beneath Clouds*.

The directors featured in First Nations/First Features are not only from a new generation. For the past two decades, indigenous directors have been creating groundbreaking work and receiving international accolades. When *Smoke Signals* premiered at Sundance in 1998, it received unprecedented acceptance and went on to gain distribution and win praise from Native Americans and the general public alike. It was the first time that Native Americans directed and co-produced a film—and arguably it was the first time this indigenous group was presented in such real, honest terms. The movie's characters, based on those from a collection of short stories by Sherman Alexie, who adapted them for the screen along with the director, Chris Eyre, were complex and human, not one-dimensional sidekicks. As perhaps the most recognized movie by an indigenous director, *Smoke Signals* will kick off First Nations/First Features on May 12. As with most films in the program, the director will be present to introduce the work.

Another film that broke barriers and gained international recognition was

director Zacharias Kunuk's *Atanarjuat: The Fast Runner*. Canada's first feature-length film written, produced, directed, and acted by Inuit won the Camera d'Or at the 2001 Cannes Film Festival. The movie, based on a traditional Inuit story, is about two brothers who challenge the curse of an evil shaman.

If the organizers have their way, First Nations/First Features will give these indigenous filmmakers a prestigious world stage on which to share their talents. Something that, as Beverly Singer, a filmmaker and member of program's advisory circle, points out is especially important in today's world. She said: "These first features remedy the absence of aboriginal/indigenous cultural voices in the fiction filmmaking world. It is [especially] important [post 9/11]... in light of intolerance about different beliefs. These films are stories that reflect a different cultural and sometimes more thoughtful film landscape, wherein moviegoers should expect not simply to be just entertained—but to become informed viewers."

For more information, please visit
www.firstnationsfirstfeatures.org.

An Online Outlet is Born

For anyone who has scored music they couldn't find anywhere else at CDBaby.com, rejoice: You can now do the same for independent films.

Drawing from a great business model plus seven years of experience with CD Baby, Film Baby's mission is to deliver independent-only titles to movie buffs the world over. "I am a true fan of independent film and music," said Portland, Oregon-based Film Baby founder, Jamie Chvotkin. "If we are able to allow artists to earn a living, find an audience, and further the idea that corporations needn't have a place in the production of film, we'll have reached all of our goals as a company."

This kind of attitude is a godsend for filmmakers who have had difficulties finding distribution for their low-budget, avant-garde, or hard-to-categorize work. From sci-fi flicks to virtual tours of foreign lands, Film Baby pretty much sells anything. "We don't want to edit anyone's expression here," Chvotkin said. "It



Jamie Chvotkin is the founder of the Portland, Oregon-based Film Baby (courtesy of Jamie Chvotkin)

isn't for us to decide what is worth watching." The exception to their open arms policy is pornography, which is restricted from the site.

Film Baby further helps filmmakers by taking on the task of creating a web page for every DVD title it sells. The page includes a two-minute trailer so customers get a good preview, a description of the film, the filmmaker's bio, customer reviews, press clippings, and links to other sites that are connected to the film. Most films retail for between \$14.99 and \$19.99, but each filmmaker is free to determine his or her price, with Film Baby keeping \$4 of each sale. With online access to their accounts, filmmakers can keep tabs on how much they're selling and who's buying their work.

As good as the site is to artists, Film Baby was created for fans. The site is extremely user-friendly so customers can focus on finding the movies they want to see, with about 20 new titles getting added a week. Unlike other web sites selling DVDs, Film Baby only carries inde-

pendent titles. "The philosophy that brought about the decision to shun studio releases was the motivation to start the business in the first place," Chvotkin said. "The less restrictions placed on art, the more it will flourish."

The variety of film subjects and styles is what Chvotkin believes really draws customers to Film Baby. "I think short films, documentary, and instructional films is where we sell the most right now," he said. In fact, one of Film Baby's best sellers is a documentary from France called *Diabology*, which is about juggling small, plastic cones. Ari Gold, a short-filmmaker from New York, is also a popular draw.

Chvotkin promises Film Baby will fill the void in the indie film world for artists and enthusiasts alike. "It is going to take a while to build traffic to the site. We are not funded by investors, we don't have big bucks backing us," Chvotkin said. "It is just me—I have sold half my personal items on eBay to fund this site. And we would not have it any other way!" ★

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Tools You Can Use

By David Alm

ikan's LCD Monitors

This new line of LCD monitors from the Houston-based ikan Corporation are designed for both amateur and professional use, and priced accordingly from just \$89.95 for a 2.5-inch screen to \$399 for the largest, which measures 9 inches. All five in the series feature antiglare TFT displays with wide viewing angles, and they are all small enough to be used in virtually any environment. With both



audio and visual connections, the V2500 offers the greatest versatility, while the higher-end V7000 and VT8000 provide such amenities as wide- and touch-screen capabilities, respectively. All monitors are both NTSC and PAL compatible. For details visit www.ikancorp.com.

Gorilla Films

This spring, Gorilla Films shaved off another lump on the film industry playing field using that great democratizing tool, the internet. The Hollywood-based firm's new web-based networking forum, at www.strongeyecontact.com, provides a central resource for the filmmaking community to find work or to staff a project, thus eliminating the middlemen who stand between an idea and its ultimate realization. The company hopes its site will beat the "800-pound gorilla" that is the commercial film industry, and

ideally make obsolete William Faulkner's famous observation that "Hollywood is a place where a man can get stabbed in the back while climbing a ladder."

UCLA Writers Program

Get UCLA training for your own writing projects from anywhere in the world. As part of the university's online extension initiatives, the Writers Program at UCLA currently offers more than 50 online screenwriting courses per year. Classes are taught by professional novelists, screenwriters, and nonfiction writers and focus on such skills as writing sitcoms, adapting narratives to the digital environment, and even how to build successful relationships in Hollywood. Tuition is \$495 per course and time commitments vary between 10-15 hours per week over a 5-12 week period. Learn more at www.uclaextension.edu/onlineStudy.

Cameras on the Fly

Guerilla photography gets a 21st century makeover this spring thanks to a



two-year contract between the Concord Camera Corp. and Source Interlink to market its camera in retail outlets around the country. Concord's lower-end digital cameras will sell for around \$200 apiece at the checkout counters of regional drugstores, bridging impulse buying with high-tech. Future contracts will be deter-

mined by how many people actually want to pick up a digital camera along with the latest *Vanity Fair* and a pack of chewing gum. We're watching. In the meantime, visit www.concord-camera.com for more information.

Animation in China

As China rapidly gains the status of global superpower in the new millennium, the country's film industry is keeping pace. The StarBoulevard Animation Company, located in the southern city of Shenzhen—China's animation capital—is a member of the China Animation Association and provides 2D and 3D design, live-action, broadcast design, special effects, post-production, and other services. Moreover, Shenzhen offers the sole training program for animation in all of South China, putting the company on par with the likes of Pixar and LucasArts. If you can read Cantonese, check out www.chinaimc.cn. Otherwise, wait until China westernizes just enough for the company to translate its site into English—probably not long off.

Writers: Get Noticed, With a Little Help from Your Agents

Writers are not often the most business-minded folk, leaving some of the finest screenplays forever unread in the dustbin of film history. Hence a new packaging service from Beverly Hills Literary Consultants, a former literary agency based in Los Angeles that currently seeks writers who need help cutting through the red tape of the Hollywood film industry. The company provides everything from editorial advice to custom-designed budgets, marketing strategies, and director/casting suggestions. Visit www.beverlyhillslit.com for more information. ★



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Fernanda Rossi

THE DOCUMENTARY DOCTOR

Dear Doc Doctor:

I produced my film independently, and I'm also trying to self-distribute, but a standard marketing budget is beyond what I can afford. Is this where my independence ends and my contact with a major distributor begins?

Independent filmmaking hasn't happened overnight but in three overlapping waves. What you are experiencing is the third wave: access to massive marketing. Advances in film technology comprised the first wave of independence—filmmakers didn't need studios to realize their dreamed films. Soon after, the first barrier emerged: Where can you show your film if huge media conglomerates own the monopoly on all major screening and broadcast venues? The second wave, democratization of venues, overcame that barrier. We saw the flourishing of cable, micro-cinemas, the internet and DVDs—all cemented by the continued efforts of pioneering filmmakers who travel across the country with their films strapped to the hoods of their cars.

Now that you can make a documentary and screen it too, how do you bring people into the screening room? Can your website and email blast compete with a

full ad in *The New York Times*? Will someone choose to see your film over all the other options available through media bombardment? The third and hopefully final barrier is equal access to marketing channels, but I wouldn't wait for another technology miracle to give every film a fair chance at being chosen.

You can embark on healthy independent self-promotion by first giving up your ego—not the ego that believes in your work and yourself but the ego hoping for an interview on “Oprah” or a full-sized poster in the subway station (options not too often available to documentary filmmakers to begin with). Take the words from that Oscar speech you've been practicing and use them to address your film's more urgent audience.

By more urgent audience I mean the sub-group of people within your larger target audience that would immediately watch your film over any Blockbuster film, or even over the Super Bowl. Let's say your film is about autism. Your target audience are health workers and parents of autistic children. Who is your urgent audience? Parents who just found out their children are autistic or maybe someone who runs an independent newsletter on autism. Your urgent audience is made up

of those who are out there just waiting and hoping that your film existed, and they are your best allies. Your film is their priority, too, and they will do with you and for you whatever it takes to get it viewed by as many people as possible.

By no means is this a new strategy, but it's a strategy worth revisiting. Remember that while massive marketing media might be in the hands of the big players, the message and the messengers (you) still matter.

Dear Doc Doctor:

After a lengthy detour, I'm coming back to filmmaking. Apart from having to learn new technology, I'm finding that crew relationships are a real challenge. I've realized that I no longer know what I'm supposed to do and how much I should expect from my team.

Your question is a dilemma that often goes unnoticed and if recognized, blamed almost entirely on personality conflicts, when in reality it's often about a paradigm shift. It used to be that someone could move up in the film production world by being the diligent assistant to those already in the aspired-toward position. Years of faithful dedication granted access to impossible-to-own equipment, people

with knowledge, and most importantly, endless hours of witnessing director-crew protocol and etiquette. It was a legacy passed from film generation to film generation, safely guarded by the unions and guilds that not only established standards but also enforced them.

You probably don't look back to those days of pyramidal hierarchy with any nostalgia, since if today you aspire to be, say, a cameraperson, you can buy a camera, read the manual, take a weekend course, and become a cameraperson right away. No waiting period, no assisting anybody, no nothing. No chance to learn the subtleties of interpersonal crew relationships either.

So as new generations of filmmakers learn their trade on the spot—unsupervised and un-coached—those with experience in customer service might actually fare better than the technology geeks. But don't leave it to chance. Just because you are independent doesn't mean you can't use the standards of the establishment.

Assume nothing, and put it all in writing. You can use the unions' and guilds' job description, guidelines, and sample contracts as a starting point. Talk through each point and include as many "what if" scenarios as possible. Give yourself "renegotiation points" and "exit points" along the process to update the relationship.

And in your case, you can check in with old buddies and see what's acceptable today. Were you a complete newcomer, I would suggest you use a mentor or someone else you trust as a sounding board for navigating exceptional scenarios. Because both then and now, people are people, and unexpected situations are bound to happen. ★

Fernanda Rossi is a filmmaker and story consultant. She is also the author of Trailer Mechanics: A Guide to Making your Documentary Fundraising Trailer. For info, visit www.documentarydoctor.com.

Want to ask the Doc Doctor a question for a future issue of The Independent? Write to her at info@documentarydoctor.com.

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Secrets and LIES



A Miramax script developer busts some industry myth-conceptions

By Maureen A. Nolan

You have become the thing that you have mocked. That's a paraphrase of a famous Shakespeare line, and it's also a line that often popped into my head after I became a script and story analyst. By choosing to work on the development side of film, I had allied myself with the "thing" most screenwriters mock: the dreaded development executive.

"How did this happen to me?" I routinely asked myself. Like most grads of art school dramatic writing programs, I had bought into the belief that Dante got it wrong: He should have reserved the ninth, deepest, darkest, skankiest circle of hell for American film execs. I had fond memories of sitting in grubby classrooms listening to student writers rage against the day when their precious pure work would be wrestled from their hands by the evil Hollywood dream machine and turned into commercial product to numb the minds of America. Once or twice, I remember muttering, "You should only be so lucky." But I knew that my classmates' imaginary pain was very real to them, and so was the complicated ques-

tion of what they would, should, or could do if asked to choose between their artistic integrity and a shot at commercial success.

In school, we were often told that only a small percentage of the writers in our class would achieve working careers in the entertainment industry. We were willing to take this as truth. After all, we knew there were many more aspiring writers than shows or films produced. The numbers clearly meant that most of us wouldn't make it to career success, but some of the faculty found a clever way to protect us from the prospect of future failure. We were encouraged to redefine "success" as self-expression and to define screenwriters as artists using the medium of script solely for their own emotional satisfaction.

One particular senior teacher was known to tell us tales of his disastrous Hollywood experience. As a screenwriter in the 60s and 70s, he wrote one notable film he considered worthy of him, artistically and politically—and then went on to turn down any writing project he

regarded as too "commercial" or too empty of artistic value. He stuck to his principles, and we admired him for it, but when he divided his total screenwriting income by his number of working years, his average annual salary equaled what a middle-class college film professor would have earned...without the anguish and angst of dealing with life in Los Angeles. And so, a little embittered and a lot cynical, he told us to write for ourselves and not bother dreaming of an industry career.

For his students, it was never a secret that we didn't buy his image of the purist artist, scribbling pages of perfect script to be locked away in desks or drawers and read, furtively, in the depths of night for the writer's private gratification. But we did learn to act blasé about the concept of commercial success. And probably it was a lie that we didn't all yearn to see our names featured in screen credits or at least on big, fat paychecks that would allow us to live—and write—comfortably.

There are writers who actually care about the perils of "selling out," but for

others, like my classmates, the queasy conflict between art and money serves as a neat defense against fear of failure. If your work doesn't sell you can always tell yourself it isn't because you weren't talented or skilled enough—it was really because you were too high-principled to compromise your integrity. By fostering the concept of screenwriter as self-satisfied artist, writing programs—at least those that don't promote their students professionally—provide their writers with an emotional bailout for flopped careers. And also justify their own existence.

This ploy—if we can call it that—is supported by a continuing confusion in American cultural values. We're taught to believe we can have it all—money, fame, success—and we're encouraged to think that we should. But we're also cautioned that money and the greed for it are the sources of all things evil in society. Popular film culture plays into this confusion with its own form of paradoxical positioning on the subject of values. So a film that may have cost millions to produce and may aim for millions in profits, might easily feature characters learning the lessons that love of money and success is shallow and inauthentic, especially compared with deeper, more humanistic values found in friendship, romantic love, self-sacrifice, and integrity. It's not surprising that screenwriters may end up puzzled and unclear about their own attitudes towards success and money, and what it may take, and cost, to achieve them.

As an analyst and consultant, I've come to believe that it's useful for writers to grapple with these issues, because they may lead to potent creative questions about why a particular writer is driven to tell a particular story. For a writer, understanding creative motivation and asking why a story should be told and what is the true purpose of the telling, helps the writer gain control over the material and the storytelling process. The more a writer knows about the "what" and "why" of a story, the easier it is to craft plot, structure, and character so the script accomplishes exactly what the writer intends it to do.

The debate over "money versus meaning," if it brings insight to the writer, can become a powerful creative tool. But the debate becomes problematic when it inspires a number of lies, or myth-conceptions—including the big lie that the relationship between screenwriter and development executive is a spin on the battle between good and evil, with the writer as a virtuous David squaring off against the Hollywood Goliath to defend the meaning and value of story from crass commercial concerns.

Early in my career, I began to learn some startling secrets about story development and the people who choose to work in the field. And most of those secrets turned on the exploding of several myth-conceptions. *All development executives are stupid:* This is a standard screenwriter belief, but there's no truth to it. It may be accurate to say that development people, like people in any profession, function at different levels of talent, skill, and experience. But the reality is that many development execs have a highly developed sense of story and a knack for figuring out how to maximize a particular story's potential. In part, their expertise comes from evaluating scores of scripts, but it also comes from having to talk about story issues and elements constantly. The result may well be that certain producers and development people are more sophisticated on the subject of story—its form, function, meaning, and value—than many screenwriters can claim to be.

As artists, writers hardly compromise their artistic integrity by collaborating with story experts who are smart and sophisticated about the writers' chosen art form. Which leads to another myth-conception: *Even the smartest development people don't actually care about their stories*—they care only about the prospect of distribution deals or big box office receipts. I can recall being taken to task by one development exec for a piece of book coverage. Apparently, I had left out the crucial "truth" that the main character's life, she said, was "miserable, miserable, miserable"—and nobody would

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ever want to see it on screen. I didn't know whether to be amused or impressed by her passionate response to the character and his circumstances, but it was obvious that her imagination had entered the world of the story so completely that it was extremely real to her.

In teaching screenwriters, I use this incident to suggest a note of hope: you will meet development execs and producers who care about your stories and characters as deeply as you do. What they may not care about is your creative ego, your personal issues about "values," or your need for self-expression. They may wholeheartedly believe that the traditional three-act structure or the "hero's journey" pattern provide the best framework for crafting screen stories that speak to an audience. And they may not care if you disagree. What's more, they may also believe that the true measure of a story's worth and meaning is the size of its audience—and that this naturally translates into dollars.

Finally, there are some secrets, lies, and myth-conceptions that development people may have uncovered for their own purposes. *Writers are never lazy.* This is a lie. They often are, and lackluster scripts often show a lack of real effort and imagination. *Writers out for commercial success fare better than writers dedicated to their artistic integrity.* They don't, because their so-called commercial scripts are usually too derivative and dull to deserve attention.

And the biggest myth-busting secret truth of all? *Stories have their own lives, separate from their creators.* Believe it. If both writers and development people are aware of this, they can work in what I like to call "service of story." By serving the story, both sides may discover that there are times when integrity and success can go together. And when they do, great and memorable screen stories are born. ★



Luke Wilson in *The Wendell Baker Story* (Laura Wilson/MHF Zweite Academy Film GmbH & Co.)

By Rebecca Carroll

Sometimes my friend Laura Donovan will call me out of the blue and just say these two words: "Macaw! Macaw!" Circa 1997, Laura told me about a small "independent" film called *Bottle Rocket* (An "independent" film? Fascinating. Do go on.) The film (which gained recognition almost entirely by word of mouth after its Columbia Pictures release in 1996), directed by a then lesser-known Wes Anderson, and written by Anderson with his friend, a perhaps even lesser-known Owen Wilson, is a pre-*Napoleon Dynamite*, and-by-geeky-I-mean-hip, somewhat dark, Holden Caulfield-esque comedic caper. It stars Owen as Dignan, along with his younger brother, Luke as Anthony, and in a smaller role, their older brother, Andrew as John Mapplethorpe (Future Man).

Bottle Rocket was, for my generation, an

introduction of sorts to independent filmmaking as we know it today (or the best of it anyway)—the story and writing were clever, original, and smart and made you feel like an insider for getting it. And even better than independent filmmaking as we know it today, it wasn't just about watching white people. I mean, sure, the bulk of the cast was white, but at the center of the film is a love story between Anthony and a beautiful Mexican maid (here I urge you to put images of *Maid in Manhattan* out of your mind) named Inez (Lumi Cavazos)—not because she's exotic and different and poor and needs saving, but because that's just whom Anthony falls in love with.

In the nearly 10 years since, the native Texan Wilson brothers have worked together on various film projects, but none that they can call their own. *The Wendell*

Baker Story, which opened Austin's SXSW Film Festival in March, is written by Luke, co-directed by Luke and Andrew, and stars Luke and Owen. I was at the film's premiere and I'm happy to say that, in the best ways, *Wendell Baker* shares quite a bit of overlap with *Bottle Rocket*. Following the premiere I had a chance to sit down and talk with Luke about the making of the film.

Rebecca Carroll: I happened to be sitting right behind you last night at the premiere, and it just occurred to me how wild it must be and how different to see a film that you have made and that is so personal to you.

Luke Wilson: Yeah, well you could probably smell me. I was pretty wet with perspiration.



Luke and Owen Wilson in the Wes Anderson-directed *Bottle Rocket* (Columbia Pictures)

RC: But how different that must be from going to a premiere of, say, *Charlie's Angels*?

LW: Yeah, it's not, "Hey, great hotel! I'm at the premiere!" It's much more like, "Okay, let's see what happens." My brother Owen was making fun of me saying: "Finally the iceman shows some emotion—gosh, you weren't like this at the *Legally Blonde 2* premiere, were you?"

RC: And why is that?

LW: For me, it's mainly the writing of it. It's not so much that we directed it, but just for me it's the feeling of having written it, and knowing that any line that somebody doesn't like they can attribute to me.

RC: Yeah, that's sort of what writing is all about.

LW: So I just started fixating on that in the last couple of days.

RC: Less so than your own performance in the film?

LW: Yeah, definitely. I'm thinking more about each character and what they're saying and how it flows and whether people connect with it.

RC: So you're pretty OK with watching yourself on film?

LW: I mean there are certain performances I like more than others of course, but I actually like the character of Wendell. So I kind of have fun watching him, to tell you the truth.

RC: One of my all-time favorite movies, I kid you not, is *Bottle Rocket*—I've seen it many times and have turned a lot of people on to it. Is this the first time you have all worked together on a feature since *Bottle Rocket*?

LW: We were all in *The Royal Tenenbaums*, and then Owen wrote *Rushmore* with Wes Anderson, and we all had small parts in that too. So we've done films where we've all been on the same set since *Bottle Rocket*, but this is definitely the biggest collaboration since then and definitely the biggest of all, in terms of just us three guys.

RC: I felt sort of nostalgic for *Bottle Rocket* while I was watching *The Wendell Baker Story* just because it has that same quirky, good-home, bizarre sort of feeling. I also happen to notice—and I don't know if other people do—but there are people of color in both, fairly prominently. Often, with independent films and the independent film world, you almost never see people of color. Were you conscious of that

when you were writing *Wendell*?

LW: I just thought about it in terms of the story being about people coming across the border from Mexico—that was the thing. But the character of Doreen wasn't supposed to be Latina, it just ended up working out with the actress Eva Mendes. I guess maybe differences between people can make for humor or the opportunity to learn about each other.

RC: What's with the prison theme—in both *Wendell Baker* and *Bottle Rocket*? And the jumpsuits? Did you guys wear jumpsuits when you were kids?

LW: (Laughs) Are there any jumpsuits in this?

RC: Of course there are. I mean—the white orderly uniforms.

LW: We all grew up wearing uniforms, so maybe that's it. We went to this school in Dallas where you had to wear gray slacks and a white shirt. One of my favorite stories is about when Owen was at UT, he ran into this kid [we went to school with], and the guy had just kept wearing his uniform from the school, but un-tucked. He just kept wearing the pants and the short sleeved white shirt, just walking across the UT campus. Which I kind of like—you know, the idea of wearing uniforms every day. But I don't know about the prison theme.

RC: Capers?

LW: Yeah, capers. I don't know—maybe it's just more fun to write stuff like that, or I guess probably easier than trying to write something like *Schindler's List*.

RC: *Wendell Baker* is definitely a feel-good story.

LW: Some little old woman asked me today, "So Wendell goes to prison, and he seems to have a good time." And it's like, obviously, it's not real. You know, if I were to get sent to prison I'd have a number of things I'd be worried about.



Owen Wilson and Eddie Griffin in *The Wendell Baker Story* (Laura Wilson/MHF Zweite Academy Film GmbH & Co.)

But this guy Wendell's story is more like a fable or a joke.

RC: It's fiction.

LW: Yeah, it's fiction. It's like a guy going to college—jumps into it, has a great time, plays sports, meets nice people.

RC: I think that we're at a weird time with movies insofar as what's fiction and what's not, especially since documentaries are on the rise, and a lot of narrative films are taking on the task of conveying reality perhaps in an effort to compete. A film critic and co-panelist with me on a press panel here said to me that he was really concerned that your film advocated stalking—and I know he was at your press conference. Did he say anything about that?

LW: I think if that guy wants to see a movie about stalking, he should watch *Star 80*. But yes, he said he was offended, very offended by the stalking. I didn't notice the stalking. I thought that's what you do when you're in love—you know, you kinda follow a girl for a while... In the beginning, doesn't it always start as stalking?

RC: More importantly, it's a work of fiction. It's an imagined story. But did you feel personally attacked or offended by his concern?

LW: It was just such a lame-ass question. I just didn't get it. And he couldn't have been more wrong. On his last try with Doreen, Wendell says, "She listened to what I had to say, and you know, I was lucky enough to have even met her." I mean, sure, he follows her around the grocery store, but I mean...

RC: Again, I would say that we're at a difficult point particularly with independent film, as it sort of gains on the cusp of mainstream, in understanding what exactly is the responsibility of writing for film. How about just a good, old-fashioned story?

LW: I don't think there is any responsibility. I don't think you need to have any, I mean. I think it's like a song.

RC: To be put out in the world.

LW: Yeah, you know, it's just different characters. That's like saying that it's dangerous to have the character in *The Woodsman*, you know, a pedophile, exist in a movie. But I think it does a service just to show things like that—to get people thinking.

RC: So you do think it does a service?

LW: Yeah, I do.

RC: And what about on the other side—with a film like *Schindler's List*

or *Hotel Rwanda*. Do those films have a responsibility?

LW: I'd say they have a responsibility to get the story right.

RC: And how can you though?

LW: What you're saying is an interesting idea, but with something like *Wendell Baker*, I mean, he's a guy who wears a seersucker suit.

RC: And looks really good in it.

LW: Thanks.

RC: Are you going to write and direct some more?

LW: My brothers and I are going to try to do this thing together.

RC: Like a company?

LW: I don't know about setting up a company. Those always seem to end up with empty offices.

RC: You'll pay for the films yourself?

LW: No, we won't. We'll find somebody else to pay for them. That'd be great though, too—do a *Passion of the Christ*, roll of the dice.

RC: I don't know if we need another one of those.

LW: I just like the idea of cutting out the middleman. ★

White: A Film Series

How does American cinema address whiteness as a racial category?

By Nicholas Boston

On a blistering cold President's Day weekend this past February, "White: A Film Series" showed a modest selection of films at The New School in New York, and tried to live up to its title for an audience of about 600 moviegoers. The festival sought to give an account of how American cinema has addressed whiteness as a racial category over the past 50 years. It was the first festival to venture such a project.

"We were intrigued by a completely fresh take on an issue that has been with us for a long time," said Carin Kuoni, director of the Vera List Center for Art and Politics at The New School, a co-sponsor of the event. The festival was also affiliated with the art exhibition, "White: Whiteness and Race in Contemporary Art," launched in December 2004 at New York's International Center of Photography. Both art show and film series were organized by Maurice Berger, a cultural critic and author of the 1999 book, *White Lies: Race and the Myths of Whiteness*.

"I was interested in films that depicted the clearest possible images of whiteness, especially with regard to issues like white power, privilege, and racism," Berger said. "I wanted the films to represent attitudes over the past five decades. And I



Todd Haynes's 2002 film *Far From Heaven*, in which a housewife begins an affair with her black gardener, was inspired by *Imitation of Life* (Focus Features)

needed to stick to a few areas of consideration, given the two limitations of the film series: that it not exceed seven films and that it [be] as accessible as possible to a general audience."

It's no secret that the film festival movement in this and other countries has played a significant role in exposing audiences to independent and low-budget films. But festivals have also satisfied an important political function in providing public forums where controversial topics can be openly named and debated. Gay and lesbian culture, for example, started going mainstream at roughly the same time (the late 1990s) that queer film festivals began cropping up. Prior to that, films like Todd Haynes's 2002 film *Far From Heaven*, starring Julianne Moore as a 1950s housewife whose conflicted marriage to a closeted gay man opens the door to an affair with her African American gardener, were not exactly standard headlining fare.

Far From Heaven, nominated for sever-

al Oscars, was one of the offerings at the "White" festival. In fact, most of the festival's lineup was likely to be familiar to the average moviegoer (no obscure art-house titles here). Indeed, the familiarity between content and viewer was the festival's main strength. Audiences were asked to digest a package of cinematic representations with "whiteness" as its nomenclature. As an exercise in viewing, that's a far cry from watching a film in isolation and interpreting its themes any which way they might come to you. As Berger pointed out, "The film festival was introducing an idea never before explored in a film series. It was designed to help foreground an idea that still has little currency in the popular press and culture."

Could public awareness for the power of "whiteness" be the next social mission taken up by the film festival circuit?

The festival's roster was book-ended by Douglas Sirk's 1959 melodrama, *Imitation of Life*—about a biracial

woman who turns her back on her black mother and attempts to pass for white—and *Far From Heaven*, itself inspired by Sirk. In between were screenings of *To Kill A Mockingbird*, the 1962 adaptation of Harper Lee's seminal novel of the same name; *Watermelon Man* (1970), by blaxploitation maverick Melvin Van Peebles, about a virulently racist white man who wakes up one day to discover that he has "turned" black; *White Dog* (1982), a hard-hitting, meeting-of-wills drama that pits an African American dog trainer against a vicious, white canine trained to attack and kill black people; *Hairspray* (1988), director John Waters's musical comedy about an overweight teenage girl's determination to desegregate the television dance show she performs on; and *Bamboozled* (2000), Spike Lee's parodic take on the ways in which blacks are represented on television when white producers are making the decisions.

In the chronology of films, there was a progression in filmmaker approach, most notably with the more contemporary films making use of humor and absurdity in a way that was off-limits to earlier productions. Films like *Hairspray*, *Bamboozled*, and *Watermelon Man* demonstrate how ludicrous American racial history is by presenting equally ludicrous characters (both black and white) and scenarios. Earlier films assume a more moralistic, some might say apologetic, stance on white tyranny. *To Kill a Mockingbird*, directed by Robert Mulligan, presents actor Gregory Peck as the munificent Southern lawyer defending a black man against charges of raping a white girl. This portrayal, cut from the swath of classic Hollywood drama, interprets whiteness as a broad social problem out

of which the individual, if he or she manages to be good enough, can step. Here, whiteness is a moral sin, not an institutional ailment. Peck is handsome, sophisticated, and enlightened—a man who does the right thing. Never mind the brutish segregationists and violent racists in the film—they're just backdrop.

In *White Dog*, whiteness bears its big, white teeth—all the better to eat us with. The film features 80s teen starlet Kristy McNichol, and the late stage-trained screen actor Paul Winfield, who plays the determined trainer out to deprogram his canine charge. It is a powerful and alarming film, one that could easily do double duty at a film festival organized around animal cruelty. But as we watch, we realize that the harm done to this innocent creature (animals trained to savage others have most likely been savaged themselves) was carried out by some meanie off-screen. For Samuel Fuller, *White Dog's* director, that meanie assumed the form of Paramount Pictures, the film's distributor, which initially banned *White Dog's*

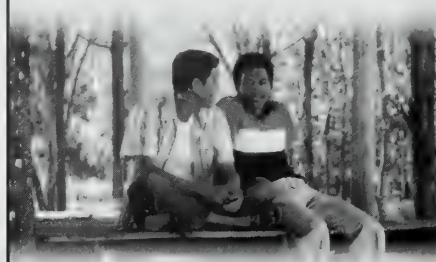


To Kill a Mockingbird, another festival choice, examined the concept of "whiteness" in 1962 (Universal Pictures)

release on the grounds that it was too graphic and disturbing.

What was striking and somewhat ironic about the selections in "White: A Film Series" is that they were all films about relations between whites and blacks. There were no films that addressed how white power or privilege is exercised

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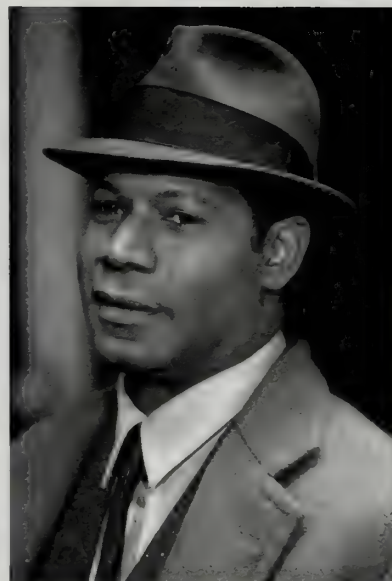


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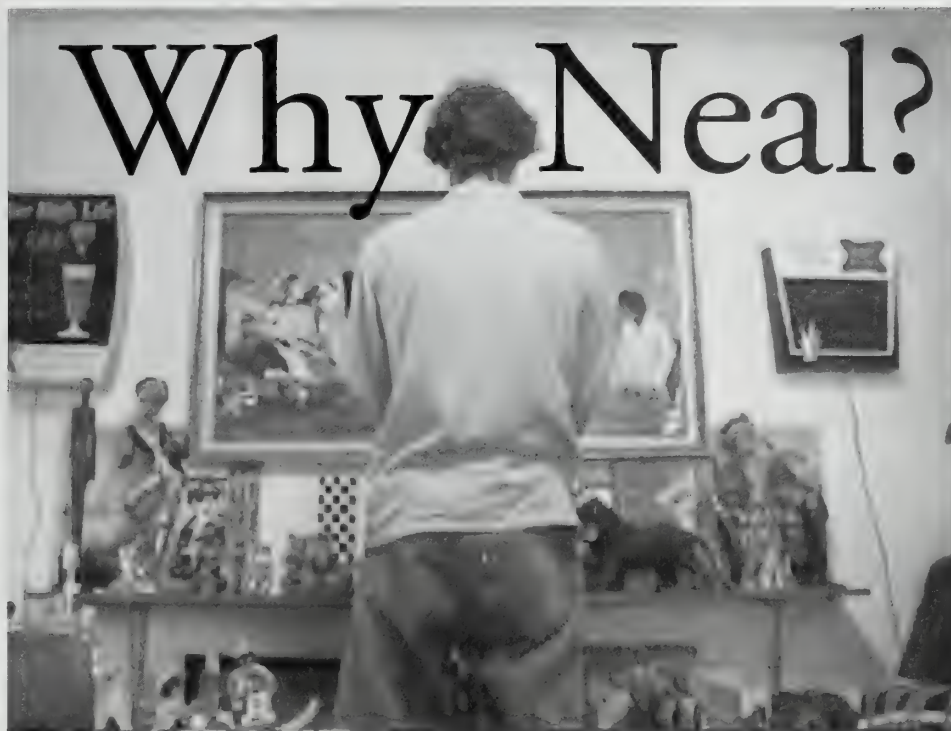


Dennis Haysbert plays the gardener in *Far From Heaven* (Focus Features)

against other groups of color—Asians for example, or Latinos. This gap begged the question: Is whiteness only “white” when it rubs up against blackness?

“Since [the festival] attempts to reach a general audience—including white people for whom the idea of ‘whiteness’ and the need for its examination remains relatively unknown—I tended to stick to a handful of key issues,” said Berger, who is white. “Interestingly,” he added, “the response to the series often fell into two camps: people of color who were relieved that a white curator was willing to see whiteness in such an honest way, and white people who said that they had never before thought of these issues, especially in relation to themselves.”

As a festival, “White” may show white people, who might think otherwise, that yes, there is a social significance to race—even their own. What, I wonder, does it show everybody else? ★



Neal Hecker working on a collage (courtesy of Chris Deleo)

Why Neal?

Choosing to document a damaged man

By Chris Deleo

I met Neal Hecker in 1991. We were both in our early 20s and stocking shelves at a local health food store on Long Island, New York. I couldn't put my finger on it at the time, but there was something about Neal that made me want to know more about him. He reminded me of Franz Kafka. Like Kafka, who poured so much of his energy and writing into Felice, his great love and muse, Neal had Jennifer, a girl whom he had once kissed when they were both 14 years old.

Neal never recovered from his puppy love for Jennifer, and over a decade later he was still mailing her long, elaborate love letters. He would leave desperate messages on her answering machine, sometimes sobbing until the tape ran out. He explained to me how his feelings for Jennifer were wrapped up with his feelings toward his mom, having been rejected by both women. He couldn't resolve the issue with Jennifer because it went too far back in his psyche.

But in 1997, Neal met Alice, a preco-

cious high school teenager. Despite their age difference (Neal then 30, and Alice 15), the two became friends. They spoke on the phone a few times, had lunch in the city, and took a walk through Central Park. When I interviewed Alice shortly after they met, she made it very clear that while she thought Neal was an interesting guy, there were absolutely no romantic feelings on her end. Neal, however, was prepared to wait until Alice turned 18 to pursue his very romantic feelings. He wanted to marry Alice, and when she told him the feelings were not mutual, Neal was heartbroken.

Honestly, I can't even begin to imagine Neal's fate if he weren't a talented and prolific artist. You always read about the dysfunctional lives of artists and how they were saved or reborn through their work. In Neal's case, this seems all the more poignant. Since I've known him, he has produced dozens of detailed collages and has written countless hours of solo acoustic guitar music. His collages are wild and hit you like a polo mallet. They

appear to stand as a monument to his childhood and deeply felt autobiographical experiences.

After several emotional setbacks, a suicide attempt, and an extended stay at New York Hospital, Neal took his mother up on her offer to come live with her in the Kings Park house she shared with her boyfriend, Vinny. I can't recall exactly how or why, but shortly after he settled in, Neal got it into his head that Vinny was out to kill him. He was sure Vinny was going to poison him or murder him in his sleep. Consequently, Neal began to devise elaborate schemes to avoid seeing Vinny face to face, like urinating into glass fruit juice bottles that he kept by the side of his bed. It was "so much easier this way," he told me. Being a creative guy, he later devised a makeshift toilet from an old hamper by lining it with trash bags and filling it with kitty litter. He kept his little toilet in a shed in his mom's backyard, and during the night, Neal would click on a flashlight, climb out of his bedroom window, and make his way to the

and the divorce, and how Bill had to raise three children alone while Anne secluded herself and battled her own mental illness. All I had to do was turn on the cam-

time to film. When I arrived at Anne's house she was usually in the midst of making breakfast—a poached egg, coffee, and toast. Vinny was at work, and Neal was always fast asleep. After a cup or two of her delicious coffee, I would turn on my camera and talk with Anne. Neal used to joke about us having a secret affair. When Neal woke up he'd always head straight for the shed. Anne never seemed to mind Neal's unorthodox use of her shed. Having grown up in a house with an overbearing father, Anne empathized with her son's need for privacy, and to a lesser degree, understood his fear of Vinny.

era and make sure it was in focus, because they were never at a loss for conversation.

Over time, more and more people became part of the filming of *Why Neal*. Friends, co-workers, siblings, love interests, all had something to say when it

[illegible]

Deleo's circular plot diagram made his editing process easier (Chris Deleo)



Cover art for the film *Why Neal?*
(Chris Deleo)

came to Neal. I also called Jennifer several times, but couldn't convince her to do an interview. Her friend Virginia explained on camera: "Jennifer wants nothing to do with Neal," and he should leave her alone. Ironically, it was

Jennifer who titled the film. During one of our phone conversations she paused and asked, "Why make a movie about Neal? Why Neal?" We hope the film answers Virginia's question.

It was always Neal's intention to leave his mother's house and move out on his own. His original plan was to stay with her for a couple of months until he got back on his feet. That couple of months turned into three years. But at the end of filming, Neal moved out and into a yoga ashram.

I shot 150 hours of footage over the course of two years. The entire project cost me less than \$2,000. When people watch the film, they never know whether they should laugh or be horrified. I always encourage them to laugh. Meanwhile, I'm trying to sell *Why Neal*. Being a team of one can take its toll. Neal helps out when he can—once a

week we both head into Manhattan to pitch the movie to distributors. Having Neal there in the flesh and shaking hands with people really helps drive home the quirkiness of the film. But the work of promoting this film is never-ending. To be honest, sometimes I want to quit everything—I want to quit everything and move far away...maybe to the French Quarter in New Orleans.

One day a few months ago, Elisa Haradon, a talented documentary filmmaker living in Seattle, emailed me after reading a review of *Why Neal*. She connected deeply with the film, and thanks to her, we now have a website—www.whyneal.com—that she has designed from the ground up. It's people like Elisa, with her enthusiasm and positive energy towards the film that have kept me sane and wanting to make more movies. ☆

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Cable for Film Geeks

The Z Channel is keeping the IFC edgy

By Sarah J. Coleman

Imagine a cable television channel that serves your every need as a lover of independent film. When you want to see the best contemporary foreign movies, they're right there for you, along with eclectic and provocative fare from all over North America. This is a place where forgotten masterpieces are restored, directors' cuts prevail, and Jacqueline Bisset gets her very own festival. Or perhaps you're in the mood for a blockbuster? That's there, too. And as a subscriber, you get a programming guide filled with commentary by some of the sharpest film critics around.

If that sounds too good to be true, it probably is—these days anyway. But from 1974 to 1989, the Z Channel in Los Angeles was all of the above. Perhaps the ultimate film geek's cable channel of all time, Z offered its subscribers programming that ran the gamut from the far fringes of obscurity to the heart of Hollywood. On any given night, viewers might tune in to find films by Luis

Buñuel, Henry Jaglom, Andrei Tarkovsky, Robert Altman, or George Lucas. Movies with tarnished reputations, like Michael Cimino's epic *Heaven's Gate* got a new life when they were shown on Z as directors' cuts. In its 15 years, Z Channel inspired what was almost a cult following (no subscriptions were ever canceled)—that is, until its troubled head programmer Jerry Harvey killed his wife and committed suicide, hastening the channel's end.

The documentary *Z Channel: A Magnificent Obsession*, airing on IFC May 9, explores the crazy brilliance of Z Channel and traces the tragic arc of Harvey's life. Written and directed by Xan Cassavetes (daughter of John), the documentary illuminates a pivotal era in the history of independent films—a time when audiences had a thirst for movies from all over the globe, when directors like Nicolas Roeg and Henry Jaglom found that even if they couldn't get a major distribution deal, they could find

an audience on Z.

Z Channel was “an unpretentious, eclectic, beautiful view of all kinds of film. It wasn't elitist, it was for the people,” says Cassavetes, who has fond memories of watching the channel as a teenager, after being grounded by her father for sneaking out to punk rock clubs. The punishment didn't seem too harsh when she got to discover directors like Kurosawa and Buñuel, or watch an edgy movie like Roeg's *Bad Timing* in the comfort of her own home. “Kids were able to see a movie like *Bad Timing*, [and get a] serious glimpse into the lives of adults,” she says. “These days it's so hard even to find a movie with adult themes for adults, let alone for kids to sneak into.”

Along with the documentary, IFC viewers will also get a chance to see some of the films that had their destinies altered when they were shown on Z. Immediately after the documentary screens, IFC will be showing Oliver Stone's *Salvador* (1986), whose star,



Heaven's Gate was panned by critics before its Z Channel showing (United Artists)



The IFC will show Oliver Stone's *Salvador* (1986) as part of their Z Channel tribute

James Woods, credits his Academy Award nomination and subsequent career to the film's exposure on Z. Then, on May 14 and 15, a whole weekend will be devoted to classic films whose destiny was influenced somehow by the Z Channel. Chief among these is *Heaven's Gate*, a western that went massively over-budget and was initially panned by critics as being un-American and a general mess. When Harvey found a single print of the director's cut languishing in a London warehouse and showed it on Z, critics reappraised the film positively. The director's cut now prevails on video.

All of this programming seems particularly fitting for IFC, Executive Vice President Evan Shapiro says, since "without Z Channel there probably wouldn't have been an IFC." Though times have changed since the Z Channel's heyday—back then, says Cassavetes, "it was possible to license films for less than trillions of dollars"—Shapiro says that IFC is

working hard to replicate the kind of cutting-edge, eclectic programming that Z pioneered. Just as Z Channel organized a slate of programming around a particular actor, director, or movie, Shapiro says, IFC creates its own mini "festivals"—the "Z Channel Weekend," for example. And no matter what the FCC says, you'll never see IFC cutting or censoring live broadcasts such as the Independent Spirit Awards. "In a world where even Chris Rock can be boring on the Oscars, we let Sam Jackson and everyone in Hollywood have control of the stage, live, without commercials," Shapiro says. "That's pretty ballsy. The same is true of our programming. We don't alter the art; content is always king for us."

All of which explains why a documentary about a troubled programmer from a small cable station in Los Angeles who killed himself and his wife found a home at IFC Productions. "Even HBO might have looked at that and said, it's a small

"fascinating, raw, A film of such quality should be rewarded with your attention."
— John Shea *TIME*

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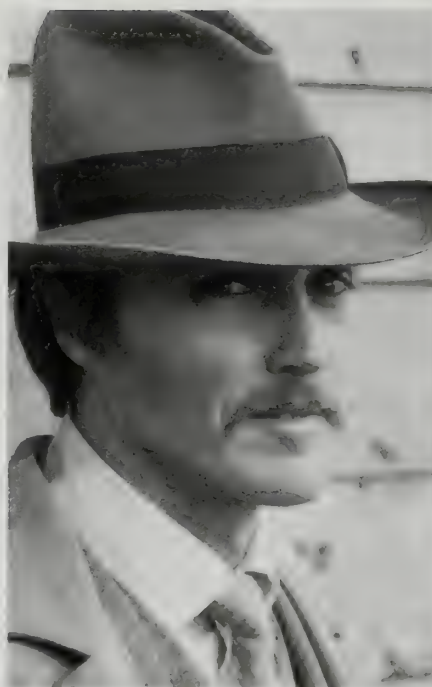
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**Christopher Walken in *Heaven's Gate*
(United Artists)**

story for a small audience," Shapiro says. "We thought it was bigger than that. We saw the legacy of Jerry Harvey being tied to the legacy of independent film. He furthered the cause of independent film and auteurs in a way that few others have."


In the film, Harvey comes across as a complex character—brilliant and driven, but spiky and pessimistic, haunted by the suicides of two older sisters. A former assistant programmer at Z Channel remembers being summoned to his office one morning and being told, "I don't like the air you breathe; I don't like the ground you walk on." But Harvey's total devotion to film is obvious, and he is warmly remembered by friends and Hollywood luminaries alike. Director Stuart Cooper, who was plucked out of obscurity by Harvey and given a "Stuart Cooper Month" on Z, remembers how Harvey was sensitive to "how someone had been slighted when they shouldn't have been slighted, or beaten up when they shouldn't have been beaten up."

Z Channel's fortunes began unraveling when the stock market crashed in 1987, and the channel's owner, a small media company in Seattle, was forced to bail out. Harvey attempted to save Z's prospects by accepting a merger with Spectacore, a sports channel. At around the same time, Z became entangled in a


complicated lawsuit, and Harvey found himself in court, giving lengthy depositions against colleagues at other cable channels. The end was nigh: a week after Z plus Sports was launched in April 1988, Harvey shot his wife to death and then turned the gun on himself. Z plus Sports limped along for another year before going off the air forever.

Shapiro says that there's a lesson to be learned from the Z Channel's trajectory, and IFC will never make the kinds of compromises that drove Z Channel off the air. "Remaining independent in an era where it's much easier and more profitable to do otherwise is probably the most courageous thing we've done," he says of IFC's 10-year history. Of course, "independent" is in the eye of the beholder. IFC is part of Rainbow Media Holdings LLC, which also runs AMC, Fuse, and the WE (Women's Entertainment) channel, and is a subsidiary of the cable company Cablevision. "Cablevision is not a small, teeny-tiny company, but when you look at the convergence of media messages out there, we are considered independent," Shapiro says. "We're a small, independent television channel that's part of a small, independent corporate parent."

Recently, IFC found what it felt was the perfect voice to express its spirit of independence: Green Day's "Jesus of



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James Woods, (in *Salvatore*) credits his Academy Award nomination to the film's exposure on Z

Suburbia," the 9-minute-plus anthem that anchors the band's Grammy Award-winning *American Idiot* album. In March, IFC and Green Day inked a deal that will see IFC using "Jesus of Suburbia" in its on- and off-air promotions for the coming year, as well as giving the song repeated exposures on the channel. It will become "our audio calling card and the voice of our vision," says Shapiro, who likes the idea that "you could get a 45-year-old professor in Amherst, Massachusetts to listen to a little Green Day because it's connected to an independent film and an 18-year-old tech-head who loves Green Day to be enticed by a title he might not otherwise have seen."

Given that *American Idiot* has been embraced by people with a grudge against the current occupant of the White House (at a recent Green Day concert in London, the audience joyfully chanted "Idiot America!"), partnering with Green Day could be seen as a political statement on IFC's part. Shapiro insists, however, that the album is essentially nonpartisan: "It speaks about not wanting to be a conformist—about things that every independent free thinker in this country probably feels at one time or another."

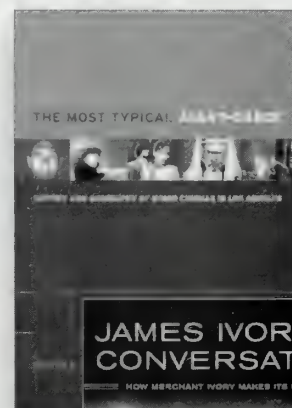
And where Z Channel employed legendary critic F.X. Feeney to write reviews

in its programming guide, IFC has Henry Rollins, whose "Henry's Film Corner" debuted last December. Formerly the lead singer of the punk band Black Flag, Rollins is an explosive personality who's as likely to hold forth on why he doesn't like dating southern Californian women as he is to launch into a diatribe about the lameness of *Terminator 3*. "We love Roger Ebert and all the film reviewers out there, but sometimes when you've been working in the film industry for many years, it's hard to see the forest for the trees," Shapiro says. "Henry won't be edited, so he's probably not going to get a show on a major network. We feel he belongs on IFC for that very reason."

"Henry's Film Corner," Green Day, the "Z Channel Weekend"—they're all ways of keeping IFC relevant, edgy, and viable. But Shapiro says IFC will never lose sight of its core mission, or "shake free from the moorings of our beginnings" as the home for independent film on television. The station's new tagline—"TV, uncut"—expresses what Shapiro sees as IFC's promise to viewers: "No crap, no clutter, just kickass shows and kickass films."

Wherever it is, the troubled spirit of Jerry Harvey can rest in peace. ★

Film Talk



JAMES IVORY IN CONVERSATION

How Merchant Ivory Makes Its Movies

by Robert Emmet Long

Foreword by Janet Maslin

"This series of conversations...informs and engages. Ivory charmingly speaks about a career that includes credits ranging from *A Room with a View* to *Surviving Picasso*. He offers insight into his technique and artistic approach, selection of subject matter, choice of actors, and interactions with associates like producer Ismail Merchant and writer Ruth Prawer Jhabvala.... Illuminating and often humorous."—*LIBRARY JOURNAL*
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THE MOST TYPICAL AVANT-GARDE

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Gregg Araki Gets Mysterious

PLEASING THE POST-PREFERENCE GENERATION WITH A
SHOCKINGLY UNSHOCKING NEW FILM

BY LISA SELIN DAVIS

Gregg Araki is George Bush's worst nightmare. In Araki's parallel cinematic universes, the mainstream is subverted, what the right wing would label "deviant" is normalized, and outcasts and outsiders dominate, calling the shots from the center. His films' usual thematic mix includes teenagers coming of age, gay sex, violence, drugs, and space aliens. Araki intends neither to indict nor explain these subjects and subcultures, but to legitimize them by not even admitting they're controversial. "I'm not out with any of my movies to shock people or outrage people or push people's buttons," he says. But some people do find his vision shocking, enough so that one blogger accused Araki's work of having "no moral center." Araki couldn't disagree more.

"As the person that makes these movies, I feel they have a very



Mysterious Skin is released this month
(Tartan Films)

strong moral center," he says. "They're presented as a story of grays and not black and whites. Not a TV movie." His goal is to tell new stories, not to rehash the same tired plots we've all seen before. "That [don't] give the audience any credit for being intelligent or creative," he says.

After eight films, the 45-year-old Araki has a cult following, an audience that is certain to widen with his latest film, *Mysterious Skin*, released this month from Tartan Films. He seems to have created a genre all his own, though it's hard to know what to call it. Beach party flick meets Troma Brothers meets Godard meets gay subculture? Araki himself described his 1993 film *Totally F***ed Up* as "a rag-tag story of the fag-and-dyke teen underground...A kind of cross between avant-garde experimental cinema and a queer John Hughes flick."

Yes, there's a sci-fi element, and there's sex and violence, with

the line between them often blurring. But there's another theme, too—one that becomes obvious if you take in his full oeuvre. Each of his films, really, is about the quest for true love and acceptance and for a place to feel at home. And what Araki offers the characters in his films, people who might otherwise be looked upon as “freaks” by the mainstream, is a safe haven, albeit a cinematic one.

“My movies are often misinterpreted as being nihilistic and dark,” Araki says. “My movies at their core are extremely romantic in that they're sort of about this idealized search for love in a world of chaos and confusion.”

Araki was born in Los Angeles and grew up in Santa Barbara. As a child, he spent hours drawing, and by 9 years old he had created his own series of comic books. “I've always been kind of an artistic spirit,” he says. As an undergraduate at the University of California at Santa Barbara, Araki

studied film history, and it was then that he began to take cinema seriously, to funnel all of his artistic energy into film. He went on to receive a master's of fine arts in film production at the University of Southern California, and he credits his formal film education with helping to define his cinematic sensibility.

“I was exposed at a young age to the breadth of film history and a pantheon of auteurs,” he says. He feels this is what separates him from the next generation of independent filmmakers—those who are attempting to emulate recent film sensations rather than studying the masters. He calls them “Sundance-y kind of directors” and “Quentin Tarantino wannabes,” pointing out that Tarantino learned by studying the films of everyone from Ozu to Truffaut, not from Hollywood hits that came out three years ago. “They don't have a sense of any kind of tradition. They've never really gone to the original source.”

You can spot the influence of these movie masters if you look closely into Araki's work: He calls *Totally F***ed Up* his own *Masculine, Feminine* (1966): “I wanted to make this film about

these gay teenagers the way Godard used *Masculine, Feminine* as an examination of French society at a certain time,” Araki says. In *The Doom Generation* (1995), the second in Araki's “teen apocalypse trilogy,” you can find cinematic quotations from Eisenstein's *Battleship Potemkin* (1925). And in *Splendor* (1999), he recreates Annie Leibovitz's famous shot of John Lennon curling himself around Yoko Ono, and there are several Busby Berkeley-style overhead shots, as well.



Joseph Gordon-Levitt (front) stars as Neil, a teenage hustler, in *Mysterious Skin* (Tartan Films)

But as much as Araki has been inspired by cinematic greats like Vertov or Kurosawa, two genres of American movies predominantly influenced him: what he calls the “couple-on-the-run” movies and screwball comedies. “They're both about the romantic notion of pure love in an impure and violent and dangerous world,” he says.

Along with his overall love of cinema, add one more ingredient and you begin to understand more completely

the Araki mindset. That last ingredient is punk. “We were so hugely influenced by the whole punk rock movement of the 70s and 80s, that philosophy of that kind of D-I-Y, garage band, do-what-you-want-and-be-true-to-yourself,” Araki says. “That sensibility was so important to me.”

Araki's “marching to your own drum” value system and his cinematic education are what make up the Araki vision—stories that, until *Mysterious Skin*, were rooted in Los Angeles. Although often, his films take place in an LA with none of the iconic landscapes—no Hollywood sign, no Hollywood and Vine, no Melrose Avenue; that's not the part of LA that interests Araki. “I've always had a very tight relationship with Los Angeles,” he says. “There is really an element in everyday life in LA of the surreal and unexpected and the strange mixing in with the ordinary and the mundane.... You can see aliens walking down the street, and you just don't really blink.” Indeed, in 1977's *Nowhere* (the third “teen apocalypse trilogy” film), an extraterrestrial follows a band of teenagers, who are unfazed by

his recurrence. It's nearly impossible to tell whether he's an actual menace or an ineffectual poser in a costume. And in the end, no one around the creature seems to care.

That's not necessarily indifference, but a kind of tolerance. "Los Angeles is so big and sprawling, and there's a really kind of laissez-faire attitude towards people," Araki says. "It's not a big deal that somebody is gay or straight or bisexual or has purple hair or is black or Asian. Everybody just sort of does their thing and people don't really pay that much attention to you. I really appreciate that about living here."

That laissez-faire attitude towards sex and sexuality, race and religion is what sets Araki's films apart. They are films for what might be called the post-preference generation—kids who are not concerned with categories of sexuality. (It's a term used by magazines like *Details* that cater to both sides of the gay/straight line or don't even distinguish between them.) And Araki extends that acceptance beyond sexuality, to race and creed—even to other-than-human species.

Something else you'll notice about Araki's films is that he manages to get fairly big stars to participate in them, along with near-forgotten teen idols, faded beauties, and rising stars. Folks like Lauren Tewes (that's Julie, your cruise director from "The Love Boat"), and Jan and Peter (from "The Brady Bunch") Eve Plumb and Christopher Knight have made cameos in Araki movies. The cast lists tend to look like a catalog of Hollywood then, now, and later: Christina Applegate, Shannen Doherty, Ryan Phillippe, Heather Graham, Mena Suvari, Charlotte Rae (Mrs. G!), Margaret Cho, Perry Farrell, Heidi Fleiss, Beverly D'Angelo, Traci Lords, John Ritter... Araki manages to cull actors from all ranks of the Hollywood social structure. "I've been so lucky in getting people to go on this ride with me, and everybody doing it for the right reason, for the artistic rewards involved," Araki says.

Based on a novel by Scott Heim, *Mysterious Skin* is a departure from many of his earlier projects, in what may be a new level of artistic reward for both the cast and the audience. Here, he leaves behind much of the irony, sarcasm, and gore that categorized his previous work and trades in the comic book look of earlier works for something more stylized, ethereal, and dream-like that, like a spoonful of sugar, helps us ingest the difficult subject matter of the movie. It's also his first film to take place outside of Los Angeles, along the flat planes of Kansas, with some scenes in New York City.

Joseph Gordon-Levitt (the former young star of television's "Third Rock from the Sun") stars as Neil, a teenage hustler, and Brady Corbet plays Brian, a disturbingly non-sexual teenage boy who believes he's been abducted by aliens. "Scott's idea to link the idea of alien abduction and being violated and taken out of your own body is such an incredibly beautiful metaphor

for what happens to young Brian," Araki says.

In the film, the two boys share a traumatic childhood incident that some might say influences Neil's choice to become a hustler, but lies dormant in the mind of Brian. The film is not an indictment of the abuser or a finger-pointing after-school special. It is more of an examination of how the experience manifests in two separate people—a character study of two boys, portrayed with brave vulnerability by the two lead actors. "Nobody's presented as this cardboard cutout of the bad guy and the good guy," Araki says. In other words, the goal here is empathy: to enter the minds of the characters, and understand the way in which they view their world. "It sheds a light and makes you go through that experience, and you really sort of understand it in a way that I don't think is possible if it didn't happen to you."

That very lack of moral condemnation or preaching is what opens the film and allows one to enter inside. "The most shocking thing about *Mysterious Skin* is how not shocking it is," Araki says. "The book is this dark and unsettling story told in this poetic and beautiful language. We wanted to translate the beauty of the prose into cinematic beauty, something that was visually lush."

Viewing the deeply unsettling, visually striking, gorgeously shot, and powerfully acted film is a bit of a roller coaster ride. "I didn't want it to be a dark, gritty, hand-held DV movie—this jarring thing to watch," Araki says. "There's a weird kind of

dreamy quality to it that makes it almost the opposite of a Larry Clark movie. *Mysterious Skin* is really oddly very welcoming and almost soothing to watch."

Well, not exactly soothing. Watching Gordon-Levitt's fierce portrayal of Neil, the young hustler who submits himself to one dangerous situation after



Mysterious Skin is Araki's first adapted screenplay (Tartan Films)

another, is not easy. In one particularly violent sexual encounter, Neil is repeatedly hit over the head with a bottle of Johnson's baby shampoo before being sodomized. But this is, in some ways, typical Araki—in your face, rough to watch, and then that strange flash of irreverent humor.

Mysterious Skin is Araki's first adapted screenplay (all others were original), and yet it contains that usual Araki lineup of characters and ideas—the gay youth, the science fiction, the sex, and the violence. But it's all handled with delicacy, a much more serious, internal, character-driven drama than we've seen from him before—more mature and nuanced, and one that will probably appeal to a wider audience. "Particularly older women



***Mysterious Skin* is deeply unsettling, visually striking, gorgeously shot, and powerfully acted (Tartan Films)**

are responding really strongly to the movie," Araki says. "I think it's this maternal instinct with regard to the two boys." Oscar-nominated actress Elisabeth Shue (*Leaving Las Vegas*, 1995) gives a notable performance in the film as Neil's mother.

You might not know it from the words in his films' titles—"nowhere" and "f***ed up"—all having to do with doom and despair and the world ending, but Araki is essentially an optimist. He remains undeterred by the bumps and snags along his filmmaking journey (seven times during our conversation he repeated, "I'm incredibly lucky") as he does about America's current political atmosphere.

"It's easy to be super gloomy and pessimistic about the current administration and culture," he says. "But the world of *Nowhere* really is becoming so true. It's proving kind of prophetic. *Nowhere* lives in a world where sexuality and race is not a big deal." Until we live in a world like this—in which tolerance is a given—Araki will continue to create them on film. In the end, his vision transforms him into a makeshift patriot.

"Is that such a controversial idea, the idea of tolerance?" he asks. "There are people out there that want to tell other people how to live. It's really so un-American. That's what America is founded upon—the freedom to be yourself." ☆



Elisabeth Shue (above and below) plays Neil's mother in *Mysterious Skin* (Tartan Films)



Keeping The Day

FINDING A BALANCE BETWEEN
WHAT PAYS YOU AND WHAT REWARDS YOU

job

BY DAVID ROTH

Like many creative people who can't afford to be creative about their material needs, the poet Wallace Stevens worked for insurance. But where many of today's creative class take day jobs to get some health insurance, Stevens's approach was more literal. After getting his law degree and struggling to make a living as a reporter, Stevens took a job in the surety claims department at Hartford Accident and Indemnity Company. Seven years after that, he published his first book of poetry at the age of 44, which promptly received a negative review in *The New York Times*. Stevens didn't publish again for a decade. By the time he broke back into print and was recognized as one of the greatest American poets, Stevens had moved up Hartford's chain of command considerably. He won

the Pulitzer Prize in 1955, the year of his death, but in the *Times*, the first line of Wallace Stevens's obituary summarized his life in the order into which material necessity had forced it: "Wallace Stevens, Vice President of the Hartford Accident and Indemnity Company and a Pulitzer Prize winner for poetry this year, died in St. Francis Hospital today."

It's difficult to imagine Wallace Stevens—numbering the ways to look at a blackbird and pondering the majesty of "The Emperor of the Ice Cream" on his walk home from work—loving his job. But Stevens never gave any indication that he regretted keeping his daytime gig. "It gives a man character as a poet," he said in a 1950 interview, "to have this daily contact with a job." Of course, Stevens was retired by then.



Matilda Sztydagis and Kristen Armenia in *Ladies Room* (Kate Bernstein)

It's great if a day job adds character—or really anything beyond a modicum of financial security—but most artists who work 9 to 5 gigs aren't doing it for self-improvement. When we work for health insurance, or for the money to keep the utilities flowing and the rent payments current, we are making a choice that isn't really a choice at all. The necessity of a day job has long been a fact of the artistic life. A lucky few can afford to make their creative work their job; the rest of us—to paraphrase the noted godfather of soul economics, James Brown—have got to use what they've got to get what they want. The trick—and it's a trick that probably rolled through Wallace Stevens's mind on those rambles home—is creating a balance between what pays you and what rewards you.

When it comes to independent film, that's complicated for several reasons. One of the more insinuating reasons is actually a romantic myth. Certain independent filmmakers are defined, to a great degree, as much by their personal back-stories as by the stories they tell. Everyone knows these guys. There's Kevin Smith, muttering wisecracks at his dead-end convenience store gig. And Quentin Tarantino, stoned cinema autodidact and video store clerk, weirding out his customers with the fervor of his praise for Monte Hellman. It's cute, this myth that independent filmmakers work menial jobs, immerse themselves in the art form they love, and then...well, somehow make *Clerks* and *Reservoir Dogs*. Unfortunately, to creative artists who want both to make ends meet and make art, this story is pretty much useless.

Useless because the cost of living, which is high even outside

cripplingly expensive urban centers like New York and San Francisco—let alone the cost of producing your own art—doesn't offer much room for picaresque day jobs. For the vast majority of artists—the majority, that is, that choose not to starve—the alarm rings every morning, and it's time to get on the bus.

Labor Days

For most artists, if you want to fund your work, you've got to work a job to secure your funds. And that means dealing with the most daunting day job challenge facing artists: When your marketable skills parallel those you use to make your art, each workday becomes a struggle to conserve your creative energy. The New York-based filmmaker Kate Bernstein, who currently daylights as a segment producer for VH1's "The Fabulous Life" (and moonlights as, among other things, a freelance writer with an article in this issue, see page 40), knows the risks of working in a field too similar to her chosen art form. "I'm happy with my work and, to me, my job is gratifying enough that the days don't suck," she says, "but because the job takes away the same type of brain power and energy that my film work does, I find that I work at a much slower pace." Bernstein wound up quitting an unrewarding previous job in order to finish her short *Ladies Room*, which she eventually took to Slamdance in 2004.

Jason Rayles, a filmmaker, multimedia artist, and computer programmer, followed the same path when completing work on *The Fair*, a short he screened at Sundance earlier this year. "I tend to work in these manic spurts, both in my creative work and my paying work," he says. "So I saved some money from



John D. Harkrider, director of *Mitchellville*, and Pi Ware, director of *The Act* at the 2005 Sundance Film Festival (Rebecca Sapp/WireImage.com)

work and then quit and went into a creative spurt.” Otherwise, both Bernstein and Rayles said, they might never have finished their films. “You can be the most motivated person in the world and it’s still going to be difficult,” Bernstein says. “You just don’t have the time or the energy at the end of the day to do your work the way you want to.”

Artists who work day jobs in their creative field pointed out another problem: investing their craft in work where there is no emotional investment. “In TV, you’re using the same skills you would in film,” Bernstein says. “So you get to exercise those skills, and you get a lot more autonomy. But the product is very different, and that can be frustrating,” Rayles agrees. “When I was first getting into Flash, I thought these animations would be my artwork, in a way,” he says. “But I noticed pretty quickly that it wasn’t giving me any creative satisfaction.” The skill-set may be the same, but the direction in which the energy is flowing makes all the difference.

This is why many artists try to create bold lines between their day jobs and their artistic work. Sometimes this can be accomplished by divesting all emotional or intellectual stakes in your work. This doesn’t mean doing a bad job, naturally; it just means knowing when to go home. “Because my computer programming work is about functionality and not about creativity, it’s a lot easier to differentiate,” Rayles says. “I prefer to save up my creative capital for a realm in which I have more con-

trol.” Another route is seeking work that’s a little bit further from your artistic interests. For instance, even though she’s using the same skills, Bernstein knew that she had to put some distance between what she does and what she wants to do after an unsatisfying experience working in the film industry. “I tried to be a PA and I just did not like working in film,” she says. “I felt so disconnected from the creative process doing that, and I didn’t want to get disillusioned.” And so sometimes, protecting your creative energy means taking a drastic step: finding a different kind of job.

Tour Buses and Power Suits

Bernstein knows that if she worked another job she wouldn’t have to deal with the energy drain that comes from spending her days among the rich and famous subjects of “The Fabulous Life.” “I could bartend or something, but I’ve got an ego, and I want to do something that uses my brain,” she says. “It’s hard to do something totally unrelated to your interests for 12 hours a day, and I don’t think I’d like doing it.”

There’s certainly no shortage of waitresses who really want to direct or bartenders who are actually cinematographers—and we’re not even going to go over the whole video store clerk thing again. Still, for all the benefits those jobs offer in terms of free time (and free food), the service industry is not the only place to find jobs that don’t feel like art. And it certainly isn’t the strangest.



Director Kate Bernstein discusses a scene from *Ladies Room* with actress Lydia Hearst (courtesy of Kate Bernstein)

For that, we'll have to check in with the Canadian filmmaker Tami Wilson and the American filmmaker John Harkrider. Wilson spends her springs and summers driving a tour bus through British Columbia, ferrying tourists to Whistler Mountain and other scenic sites north of the border. Harkrider works long hours as a partner in the Manhattan law firm of Axinn, Veltrop & Harkrider. By day, he's an antitrust lawyer and author of papers like "Operationalizing the Hypothetical Monopolist Test." By night—often on nights after full days of work—he became the writer, director and star of the feature film *Mitchellville*, which played to great praise at this year's Sundance. It's hard to imagine two more disparate jobs, but both Wilson and Harkrider have found day jobs that make their artistic work both possible and meaningful.

When a documentary she made in film school introduced Wilson to the world of female long-haul truckers, she realized that there was decent money in vehicles with more than two axles. And tour bus driving fit another of her criteria. The seasonal nature of the job, she writes in an email interview, means, "You can drive in the spring and summer and do your own thing in the fall and winter." For Wilson, that thing is shooting a documentary called *Flesh*, which follows a diverse group of "women who make meat their business," ranging from a rancher to a Hooters waitress. Despite the subsidies and grants Wilson is using to finance her film, it's not something she could've made without her day job. "Filmmaking does not occur in a bubble," she writes. "And driving exposes you to a broad spectrum of social realities." Moreover, she adds, "Filmmaking and tour bus driving are not so different. A filmmaker tells stories with a given set of tools and a tour bus driver narrates to a changing visual landscape... In the end, it is all about knowing your audience, whether they are in a bus or a theater."

Harkrider, on the other hand, will never argue that corporate law and filmmaking are similar, which was why he was so ded-

icated to making his debut feature *Mitchellville*, and is so intent on making another film. Harkrider graduated from college saddled with student loan debt and entered corporate law out of necessity. He describes his time practicing law as "utter and complete unhappiness...Wall Street represented everything I abhorred in life." But the experience also helped him to figure out what he really wanted to do. Three years after becoming a partner at his law firm, he says, "I decided that now that I had some financial stability, I needed to do what I said I wanted to do." He finished shooting *Mitchellville*—which he had written as a novel in 1994 and had been crafting into a screenplay in his after-work time since 2002. Much of the film was shot after Harkrider got done at the law firm, meaning that he sometimes logged as many as 22 hours of work per day. He sunk his life's savings into the film, and while he would never again use his own money on a film, he also "wants nothing more than to make [another] film." The bruising experience taught Harkrider a valuable lesson. In an email, he writes, "I think the day job made me appreciate compromise."

And there, perhaps, is the most profound fringe benefit a job can offer. Day jobs leech energy and bifurcate mindsets. They can be maddening and require far more exposure to fluorescent lighting than anyone should have to bear. But they're necessary. "As an adult, this is just life," Kate Bernstein says. "I need to work, make money, and survive." By providing an opposition against which to exert creative energy, day jobs also inevitably force upon the artists who work them a more nuanced perspective on the relationship between the twin halves of their lives.

"The hope is always that someday, something you make will catch and make it possible for your work to become self-sustaining," says Jason Rayles. But until that happens, he says, "the good part about having a day job is that it enables you to do your work without making compromises just so you can eat lunch tomorrow." Wallace Stevens couldn't have put it any better. ★

Effie Brown

SUPER PRODUCER BUSTS OUT ON HER OWN—

OPRAH STYLE

BY KATE BERNSTEIN

"A hybrid of a hippie commune and capitalism," is how revered indie film producer Effie Brown describes the goal of her new production company, Duly Noted. "A safe place where filmmakers will be able to go and create, know they're not going to get screwed over, and at the end of the day be prosperous."

In a time and economic climate when other independent production companies are closing their doors, and wings of the major studios increasingly make "independent" films, starting a production company is a bold move. Yet, Duly Noted is kicking off its first year with eight films on its slate, half of which have already either secured financing or appear close to doing so as of this writing. Brown took a year off producing to find and develop the eight diverse projects Duly Noted will launch and is confident that she'll be able to add a new project every time one of the films completes production.

Duly Noted has been a long time in the mind of Brown, who has been dreaming and talking about having a production company of her own for years. And the name Duly Noted is apropos of an even longer struggle the producer has had in the film industry. It's a phrase she co-opted from her days as a production assistant. "Duly noted is what I call an exclamation point on a statement—it could mean a whole bunch of things," she says. "I had bosses back in the day who told me

to do stuff and I couldn't say what I really wanted to say and I really couldn't argue, so I would just say 'duly noted.' It doesn't mean that I agree or disagree."

It's no surprise that Brown wants to keep the memory of sweeping up cigarette butts on set in the forefront of her company's identity as she sets out to help aspiring filmmakers make their movies. Brown arrived in Los Angeles with absolutely no connections to the film world. "I was just a black girl from New Jersey, the only person I knew who ever went into film. My family back East were like, 'you're going to LA to go to film school? Are you high?'"

But Brown attended the film program at Loyola Marymount University very clearheaded. And she took with her lessons she learned from her family. An army brat, Brown grew up with the conviction that failure was not an option—she would go full force and with all her heart. She also knew she couldn't afford to be a late bloomer. So once in Tinseltown, Brown called the Black Business Bureau and told the operator she wanted to work on a black film. "It was very ghetto fabulous," she remembers fondly. "The operator put me in touch with her cousin and her cousin, called someone." Brown scored her first job as an intern on Robert Townsend's *The Five Heartbeats* (1991), and her days of sweeping cigarette butts began.



Brown on the set of *Un Dia en la Vida* with director Marco Orsini (Joseph Pier)

But what really gave Brown her big break was participating in IFP's first year of Project Involve, where women of color were introduced to people in the film industry through a mentoring partner. There, Brown met producer Laurie Parker (*Drugstore Cowboy*, *My Own Private Idaho*, and music supervisor on *We Don't Live Here Anymore*), whom she is still working with years later. Despite a potentially bumpy start, Parker went on to open many doors for Brown. She says: "In my first interview with Laurie Parker, I was so arrogant, I said something stupid like 'I'm going to be as big as Oprah.' Thank god she thought it was cute."

While Brown hasn't exactly reached the billion-dollar mark quite yet, she did rise up in the ranks astonishingly quickly. By her early 20s, she was the director of development for Tim Burton's production company, living large in a corner office and having loads of creative control—while also producing short films and gaining production experience. When everyone was laid off from Burton's company, however, Brown learned an even more important film industry lesson. "When I lost my job, I found out all those people I thought were my

friends, weren't," she said. "They didn't return my phone calls. I thought those were only stories you heard. So you learn to keep your true friends really close."

Fortunately, Brown had more than a few of those, including Parker, and with her newfound experience, she started line producing. Her first film as a line producer was *Spark* (1998), directed by Garret Williams, and she quickly moved on to higher profile projects like Morgan J. Freeman's *Desert Blue* (1998), starring Christina Ricci and Kate Hudson, *Speedway Junkie* (1999), *But I'm a Cheerleader* (1999), and *Things You Can Tell Just By Looking at Her* (2000) starring Glenn Close and Cameron Diaz.

"I had to be really aggressive and take the impossible jobs that no one else wanted," Brown says. "When I started line producing, I'm sure I was the last person on everyone's list. Thank God it turned out okay and I could move on. You work your way up and build a reputation."

Her first turn as a producer came when director Jim McKay approached her to co-produce Cheryl Dunye's *Stranger Inside* (2001). Very simply, McKay brought Brown onto the project



Brown on the set of *Everyday People* (courtesy of Wellington Love)

because he knew she could do it. “Until that point, Effie had been line producing and I felt that she was ready to get involved more on the creative level and have more responsibility overall,” McKay says. “And I’ve got many, many weaknesses [as a] producer, many of which were, conveniently, strong points of hers. So it was a great match.”

Through *Stranger Inside*, Brown developed a relationship with HBO Films, and went on to produce a few more films with them, including *Real Women Have Curves* (2002). And then in 2003, she rejoined with mentor Laurie Parker to produce Jane Campion’s high profile *In the Cut*, starring Meg Ryan.

It’s an impressive roster for a 33-year-old black woman with few role models to call her own. What makes her so successful? According to *Everyday People*’s executive producer, Nelson George, Brown has unique characteristics that make her an exceptional producer. “Number one, she has a fantastic personality. She is able to draw people in and instill a sense of confidence in the production,” George says. “Number two, she really knows the nuts and bolts of filmmaking fantastically well. So she has great spirit and energy, and she’s also totally on top of the fundamentals of filmmaking—it’s an amazing combination.”

It was this winning combination that saved *Everyday People*

(directed by McKay) from never seeing celluloid light. “[Effie] came in and did a couple of things that were really important,” George says. “She was able to go through the budget and find areas of concern that we hadn’t dealt with. And she bought drinks for the entire crew and made everyone feel a part of the production.”

McKay concurs. “When I got on set with Effie on *Everyday People*, I had this shocking realization of how wonderful it was to simply direct, to trust and know that someone else was worrying about everything else,” he says.

Both George and McKay believe that the respect and awe the independent film community has for Brown ensures her company will succeed. “She is a force of nature,” George says, “and in a position to be a real major factor in independent American filmmaking.” McKay adds, “Basically, Effie gets the job done, and then some. She is responsible and honest when it comes to dealing with the financiers, and she is protective and supportive with her directors.”

Indeed, starting a production company was the obvious next step for Brown’s career. “As a producer you feel more like a hired gun,” she says. “I wanted something that I was a part of from conception—you find a writer and a director and do the script work and develop it together.” But Brown also had a much bolder reason for starting her own company.

“I went into film because I was incredibly angry,” she says. “I was incredibly angry that I never got to see someone like me, a person of color, on film. I didn’t really see anyone who was different or any different story lines. That pissed me off. So what I wanted to do was bring those types of stories to the screen. I was able to find people who had the same sort of good taste and had the same idea that films can be used to protest, as well as to educate, as well as to entertain. And that’s what I’m trying to do.”

And for Brown, it’s important for Duly Noted to bring together an eclectic group of films and filmmakers. Her platform is diversity, and she doesn’t want to get pigeonholed into doing any one sort of genre or issue. “I don’t believe in stereotyping myself,” she says. “I won’t only do films [about] people of color, and I won’t only work with people of color or women. That makes no sense to me. I do good movies. I do stories that are compelling, things that engage me. Because I’m black and a woman, I’m sure there is subject matter I can really identify with and that’s one thing, but I refuse to put myself in the hole.”

And certainly, the eight films that Duly Noted has on its debut slate reflect exactly that kind of diversity. They are: *Polish Bar*, by Ben Berkowitz and Ben Redgrave, about a young middle-class Jew who leaves his family jewelry business to become a hip-hop DJ at a local Polish gangsta-run strip club; *Bobby Zero*, by Markus and Mason Canter, about broke and jobless 30-year-old artists and musicians dealing with love and life; *American Way*, by Marco Orsini, about a Puerto

Rican family that arrives in the American South determined to assimilate and succeed; *My Place in the Horror*, a horror genre flick by Robert O'hara set in a typical remote location but with an atypical all-black cast; *Exactly Like You*, by Silas Howard, about a man's pursuit of women, music, and fame all while hiding he was actually born a woman; *Powder Blue*, about a group of people looking for redemption, connection, and faith in Los Angeles; *Rocket Science*, by Jeff Blitz (who was nominated for an Oscar for *Spellbound*), about a high school boy who goes into the competitive world of debate despite his stutter; and *Strangers in the Snow*, by Zackary Dean, a violent and suspenseful thriller about a family that must run for their lives during a Thanksgiving celebration.

Of course, Brown's identity as a woman of color feeds her compassion for all sorts of subject matter that other producers might not have. "Being who I am makes me a little more sensitive," she says. And the same identity also gets her noticed more than some other producers might be. "Being a black woman with red hair also makes me stand out a little bit," she says with a laugh.

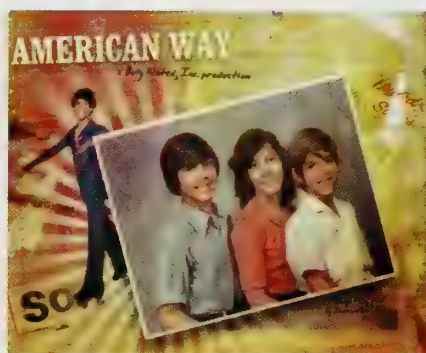
But it is purely her film prowess that got her a first-look deal, support from HBO Films, and a solid starting ground to get her films made. Yet Brown is fiercely independent, making sure that no one owns any part of her company, ensuring she has the option to search for funds anywhere. "I want to be able to go everywhere," she says. "There's a lot of places to go and get money. I'm not opposed to going to a studio arm to get money. I'm all for that. I'm all for the billionaire. If he or she wants to invest in film, excellent. I'll do a co-production. I want to be able to go anywhere that's the best place to serve my film. Be fluid and go wherever I need to."

What is equally important to Brown, however, is that she also hasn't forgotten her roots and makes giving back a top priority. Over a decade after her own experience with the organization, she's back to working with IFP's Project Involve. Only this time, she's a mentor. "It's a cutthroat industry, but there's room for everybody and I would love to foster that," she says. "That's how I made it. If it weren't for that mentorship there would be no one looking out for me." That charitable spark sounds a little like Oprah.

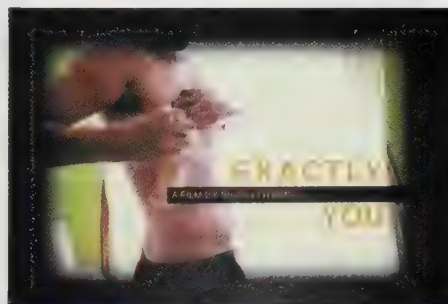
And as for that big-as-Oprah prediction? "You're not going to be buying your Jaguar or your Beamer in the independent film business, but you might be able to buy a nice pair of shoes," Brown says. "And I don't want to do anything else. I'm not complaining. I can go out to eat. I can take my friends out to dinner. I'm good. I've always been about the base needs. Can you pay your rent? Yeah. Can you go see a movie? Good. Can you buy a drink? Great. That's all you really need. Cause I do my own hair so it's totally fine. I dye my hair, let it nap up, and call it a day." ★



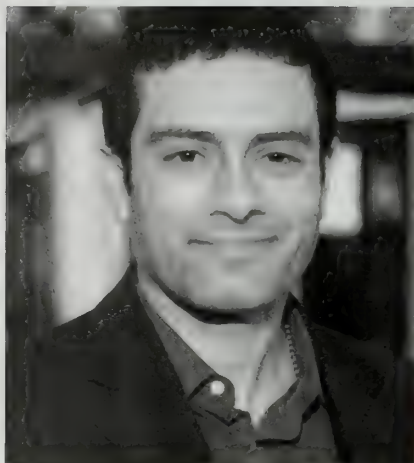
Brown and George Lavoo on the set of *Real Women Have Curves* (Nicola Goode/HBO)



A Duly Noted Inc project slated for next year (Illusiontank.com)



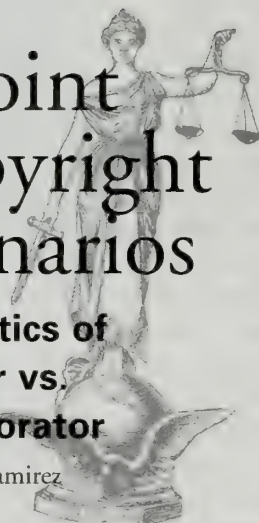
One of Duly Noted Inc's new projects (Silas Howard/Rebecca Rosenthal)



Joint Copyright Scenarios

The logistics of co-author vs. co-collaborator

By Fernando Ramirez



tions (developing the plot and theme, creating most of character elements, and writing a significant portion of the dialogue) make him a co-author of the screenplay. Is Tom a co-author? If in this instance Lynn kept sole decision-making authority as to what went into the screenplay (including final approval over all changes), if she retained the exclusive right to enter into agreements regarding use of the screenplay without Tom's consent, and if billing and credit on all materials indicated "Original Screenplay, by Lynn," then chances are Tom, although collaborating with Lynn, is not a co-author of the screenplay.

Who owns the copyright in a screenplay when the author works with a screenwriter to help the author rewrite and develop the storyline? Can a singer/songwriter featured in a music video or documentary directed, produced, and edited by the filmmaker claim co-ownership in the copyright to the video? How about the consultant who's hired to help an actor with his role, but then also makes additional contributions during principal photography and post-production? These collaboration scenarios involve occasionally tricky issues regarding copyright law and joint authorship.

Most screenwriters or filmmakers have a basic understanding of what copyright is: protection of an author's original material. This protection is automatic from the moment the material is created, and gives the author/creator (or other person who has acquired ownership) certain exclusive rights to exploit the material (make copies, distribute, publicly perform, and adapt). As the copyright owner, you also have the right to stop others from exercising those rights. Generally speaking, when someone other than the owner uses the material without permission (or in other words, violates any one of your exclusive rights), copyright infringement occurs—unless that someone is a joint author (sometimes referred to as a co-author) of the material.

For copyright purposes, joint authorship is the process by which two or more individuals combine their efforts to create a joint work. The co-authors are also

co-owners of the copyright in the material created, which just as one might assume, provides them with equal ownership of the material. In other words, unless there is an agreement stipulating otherwise, each joint author has the right to use, license, or otherwise exploit the material as he or she wishes without the other joint owner's consent, and with only the obligation to the share profits, if any, with the other joint owner.

Given the high stakes of the multi-billion dollar a year film and television industry, where any given script or film can carry with it significant financial and career success, establishing sole (as opposed to co-) ownership of a script or film from the start is, to say the least, rather important. This is especially true because collaborating on the scriptwriting or film production process does not always amount to co-authorship and co-ownership for copyright purposes. To bring to life these issues, the following are some illustrations of joint authorship disputes. In none of these scenarios did any of the parties have a written agreement specifying their rights or credit.

Scenario One

Lynn, the author of an original screenplay, asks Tom, a screenwriter, to help her rewrite and develop the storyline of her screenplay. After a few rewrites, a film based entirely on the final draft is produced and distributed with box office success. Tom then decides to sue Lynn, claiming that his collaborative contribu-

Scenario Two

Jonathan, a filmmaker, produces a music video/documentary called "Marked" for singer/songwriter Billy. Billy later signs to a new label that releases a music video called "Vieuphoria" containing short clips taken from the "Marked" video produced by Jonathan. Jonathan sues Billy for copyright infringement, claiming that because he produced the video and kept possession of the master, that he was the sole copyright owner. Billy argues that he had every right to use the clips because as the featured artist, he was a joint author of the video. Who owns the copyright? Both Jonathan and Billy are co-owners and joint authors of the "Marked" video because in this case, each person's collaborative contributions are what made the music video/documentary.

Scenario Three

Mr. Washington, an actor, engages Mr. Jeffries, a historian/documentary filmmaker, to help him prepare for his starring role as a renowned historical figure in a movie. In addition to helping the actor authenticate his role, Mr. Jeffries makes various contributions to the making of the movie, including reviewing and revising the shooting script, occasionally directing Mr. Washington and other actors while on the set, and editing parts of the movie. If Mr. Jeffries is credited as a "Technical History Consultant," can he successfully claim that based on his extensive contributions he is entitled

to co-ownership of the copyright in the movie? Probably not, unless Mr. Jeffries could establish that he had artistic control over the production process in the same capacity as a producer or director.

Anyone engaged in collaboration arrangements should clearly spell out duties, rights, and credit, so as to avoid or mitigate authorship or ownership disputes. The following are some pointers that screenwriters and filmmakers should bear in mind when embarking on a collaborative screenwriting or video/film-making process:

Writer or other agreements (co-producer, director) should stipulate that any and all changes incorporated into the material (script/film) are the property of the individual or company doing the hiring.

All billing and credit should clearly indicate authorship ("Screenplay by John Doe" or "Film by John Doe").

Filmmakers, especially music video producers or documentary filmmakers with subjects involving singers, should never assume that they will be the sole author for copyright purposes of the film or video created.

Mere possession or ownership of reels or master videotapes does not translate into copyright ownership.

Any screenwriter or producer looking to retain full copyright ownership should clearly stipulate in writing that they have sole decision-making authority (selling, licensing, and optioning), and full artistic control (final approval over all script changes or scenes in the final print).

Never assume collaboration will always mean joint authorship.

Spelling out such terms is not a guarantee that a screenwriter or filmmaker won't encounter some uninvited ownership claims. In fact, the three scenarios provided are from actual joint authorship disputes that went to litigation. At the very least, having clear agreements can help establish whether co-ownership was what the parties actually had in mind when they began collaborating and could even play a role in deterring wrongful or misguided claims of ownership, including costly litigation. ★

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FESTIVALS

By Bo Mehrad

Listings do not constitute an endorsement. We recommend that you contact the festival directly before sending cast-sets, as details may change after the magazine goes to press. Deadline: 1st of the month two months prior to cover date (e.g., Sept. 1st for Nov. issue). Include festival dates, categories, prizes, entry fees, deadlines, formats & contact info. Send to: festivals@aavf.org.

DOMESTIC

ACTION/CUT SHORT FILM FESTIVAL, Aug. 29-Sept. 1, CA. Deadline: March 15; May 15. Cats: short, any style or genre. Awards: \$35,000 in cash & services. Preview on DVD or VHS. Entry Fee: \$40-\$85. Contact: Action/Cut Filmmaking Seminars; filmmak.org; actioncut.com; www.actioncut.com.

ALL ROADS FILM FESTIVAL, Sept.-Nov., CA/DC. Deadline: May 7. A multimedia fest & grants program created to provide a platform for indigenous & under-represented minority-culture storytellers. Cats: feature, doc, short, animation, music video. Awards: Audience Awards in each category. Formats: 70mm, 35mm, 16mm, Beta, DigiBeta, Mini-DV. Preview on VHS or DVD. Entry Fee: None. Contact: All Roads Film Project; (202) 857-7692; allroads@ngs.org; www.nat'lgeograph.com/allroads.

BIG BEAR LAKE INT'L FILM FESTIVAL, Sept. 16-18, CA. Deadline: March 1; April 8 (final scripts); June 20 (final). This year's cultural event will showcase German cinema. The fest is located in Big Bear Lake, California, nestled in the San Bernardino Nat'l Forest, just two hours outside of Los Angeles. Cats: feature, student, short, script, doc, family. Preview on VHS or DVD. Entry Fee: \$35-\$45. Contact: Monika Skerbelis, Festival & Programming Director; (909) 866-3433; fax: same; bigbearfilmfest@aol.com; www.bigbearlakefilmfestival.com.

BOSTON JEWISH FILM FESTIVAL, Nov. 2-13, MA. Deadline: May 1; May 20 (final). Fest is a non competitive event. Fest screens films & videos that highlight the Jewish experience;

deal w/ themes of Jewish culture /heritage/history; or are of particular interest to the Jewish community. Projects can be of any length. Films must not have previously screened in Massachusetts. Founded: 1989. Cats: feature, experimental, animation, doc. Awards: Audience choice awards. Formats: Beta SP, 35mm, 16mm, DVD. Preview on VHS. Entry Fee: \$15; \$25 (final)- no fees for int'l submissions. Contact: Festival; (617) 244-9899; fax: 244-9894; programming@bjff.org; www.bjff.org.

BRONX INDEPENDENT FILM FESTIVAL, June 5-9, NY. Deadline: May 2; May 16 (final). Presented by Bronx Stage & Film Company, fest seeks not commercially exhibited prior to fest dates. Cats: feature, doc, short, animation, experimental. Formats: DV. Preview on VHS or DVD. Entry Fee: \$10-\$20. Contact: film@bronxstage.com; www.bronxstage.com.

CHICAGO INT'L CHILDREN'S FILM FESTIVAL, Oct. 27-Nov. 6, IL. Deadline: May 1; May 31 (final). The CICFF is the largest competitive fest for films & videos for children in North America, & programs over 200 films & videos from 43 countries targeted primarily for children ages 3-14. Entries must have copyright date of previous two years or later. Fest presents films in contexts which encourage dialogue between filmmakers, children, parents & educators. Goal is the sustenance & nurture of positive images for children. Fest is the only children's film fest selected to be an Academy Award® Qualifying Festival. Founded: 1984. Cats: children, adult Produced Feature, short, TV, animation, child-produced work (ages 3-13), youth media, family, feature, doc. Awards: Best of Fest Prize; Montgomery Jury Prize, Adult & child: Liv

Ullmann Peace Prize & Rights of the Child Prize (\$2,500-\$500), in addition to 1st, 2nd & Certificates in all submission cats from Adult & Children's Juries. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, Beta SP. Preview on VHS (PAL or NTSC) or DVD. Entry Fee: \$40/\$50 (final) Short (Less than 60 mins.); \$80/\$90 (final) Feature(60 mins. or more); no fee for child-produced films (age 3-13). Contact: CICFF; (773) 281-9075; fax: same; kidsfest@facets.org; www.cicff.org.

CHICKS W/ FLICKS FILM & VIDEO FESTIVAL, Aug., NY. Deadline: June 3. Fest is a one-day film event in NYC that showcases the works of independent women filmmakers. The goal of the fest is to encourage, support & foster indie filmmaking as well as generate an audience & supportive following for women filmmakers. Films must be 20 min. or less. Founded: 1999. Cats: any style or genre, short, doc, animation, experimental. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, 1/2". Preview on VHS. Entry Fee: \$10. Contact: Yhane Smith; (212) 926-8894; yhane@chicksw/flicks.org; www.chicksw/flicks.org.

CONEY ISLAND FILM FESTIVAL, Sept. 30-Oct. 2, NY. Deadline: May 6; July 1 (final). Fest's mission is to raise funds for the non-profit arts organization Coney Island USA & to present a fun & unique program of films at the legendary Sideshows by the Seashore & Coney Island Museum venues. Cats: feature, doc, short, animation, experimental, music video. Formats: DV, 16mm, Super 8, 35mm. Preview on VHS, DVD or Mini-DV. Entry Fee: \$20; \$25 (final). Contact: Festival; info@coneyislandfilmfestival.com; www.coneyislandfilmfestival.com.

DC ASIAN PACIFIC AMERICAN FILM FESTIVAL,

Oct. 6-15, DC. Deadline: April 1; May 1 (final). The fest's mission is to "bring attention to the creative output from APA communities & encourage the artistic development of APA films in the greater Washington DC metropolitan region." The screenings are held at the Smithsonian Institution's Freer Gallery of Art's Meyer Auditorium, the Hirshhorn Museum & Sculpture, the Canadian Embassy, & other venues. Founded: 2000. Cats: feature, doc, short, experimental, animation. Formats: 16mm, 35mm, Betacam. Preview on VHS (NTSC) or DVD. Entry Fee: \$10 (shorts & features); \$20 (final). Contact: Festival; gene@apafilm.org; www.apafilm.org.

DOCSIDE FILM FESTIVAL, Sept., TX. Deadline: June 15. Fest is organized by the Doc Film Project, & is the only documentary film fest in Texas. Fest's objective is to showcase the best documentaries from Texas, the US, & the world, w/ the purpose to form alliances w/ other film organizations & media groups. Grad film students encouraged to send documentaries. Founded: 1999. Cats: short Doc, feature Doc, experimental Doc, . Formats: S-VHS, Beta SP, DigiBeta, DVD. Preview on DVD. Entry Fee: \$35. Contact: Doc Film Project, attn: Lucila Betz; (573) 356-0634; docfilmproject@yahoo.com; www.docfilmproject.homestead.com.

ECHO PARK HUMAN RIGHTS FILM FESTIVAL, Oct. 21-23, CA. Deadline: May 1. Annual fest is seeking films dealing w/ human rights or int'l relations issues. Cats: feature, doc, short, any style or genre. Awards: honorarium awarded. Formats: DV, 16mm, Mini-DV, 1/2", DVD. Preview on VHS or DVD. Entry Fee: None. Contact: Echo Park Film Center; (213)484-8846; paolofilm@hotmail.com; www.echoparkfilmcenter.org.

EUREKA INT'L FILM FESTIVAL, Oct. 22-30, NY. Deadline: May 20; June 17. Festival showcases political & socially conscious films by filmmakers from all over the world, presenting views that span the political spectrum. Fest celebrates the "freedom of expression" & will feature documentaries, fictional works, animations & political humor. Founded: 2005. Cats: feature, doc, animation, short. Formats: 16mm, 35mm, Beta SP. Preview on VHS or

DVD. Entry Fee: \$25 shorts; \$30 features. Contact: Festival; (212) 714-4617; info@eurekaiff.ocm; www.eurekaiff.ocm.

FIRSTGLANCE: HOLLYWOOD FILM FESTIVAL, Dec., CA. Deadline: June 15; July 1 (final). Fest encourages both student & professional film & videomakers w/ all budgets. Festival's mission is to exhibit all genres of work (film, video & digital productions) from mainstream to controversial in a competitive casual atmosphere. Founded: 1999. Cats: feature, doc, student, short. Awards: Prize packages totaling over \$25,000. Formats: DVD, DV, 8mm, super 8, DigiBeta, Beta SP, Beta, S-VHS, 1/2", 3/4", 35mm, 16mm. Preview on VHS (NTSC) & DVD. Entry Fee: \$30-\$50. Contact: William Ostroff; (818) 464-3544; (215) 552-8566; wropro1@msn.com; www.firstglancefilms.com.

GOD ON FILM FESTIVAL, July 11, NY. Deadline: April 1; May 15. Fest seeks short films that explore spiritual themes such as redemption, faith, struggle, & the supernatural. Cash prizes in 3 cats (up to 10 min., up to 15 min., up to 25 min.) & one Best of Show winner. Founded: 2004. Cats: short. Formats: Mini-DV, DVD. Preview on VHS or DVD. Contact: Festival; (212) 730-8300 x202; fax: (800) 863-1239; info@godonfilm.com; www.godonfilm.com.

GREAT PLAINS FILM FESTIVAL, Aug. 1-14, NE. Deadline: June . Fest is a biennial regional venue for indie film & video artists working in the US & Canada. Open to film & videomakers either from the Great Plains region, or those whose film/video realates in content or in narrative to the Great Plains. Fest provides a forum of the diversity of life on the Great Plains through panel discussions, special appearances & tributes. Cats: feature, doc, short, animation, experimental, youth media. Awards: 10 cash prizes ranging from \$500-\$3,000. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, S-VHS, U-matic, DVD, DigiBeta, 1/2". Preview on VHS. Entry Fee: \$20 shorts; ; \$30 features. Contact: Mary Riepma Ross Film Theater; (402) 472-9100; fax: 472-2576; dladel1@unl.edu; www.theross.org.

HEARTLAND FILM FESTIVAL, Oct. 13-21, IN. Deadline: June 1. Fest seeks features &



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HIP-HOP ODYSSEY INT'L FILM FESTIVAL (H2O), Nov. 13-19, NY. Deadline: June 1; July 15 (final). Fest showcases "the best of American & Int'l independent Hip-Hop cinema." The fest's mission is to create "cultural sustainability & industry longevity by supporting the use of Hip-Hop culture as a tool for social awareness & youth empowerment". Cats: youth media, feature, doc, short, animation, experimental, PSA, music video. Entry Fee: \$15-\$30. Contact: Stacey L'Air Lee, Programming Director; (212) 500-5970; fax: 300-4895; stacey@hiphopassociation.org; www.h2oiff.org.

HOT SPRINGS DOC FILM FESTIVAL, Oct. 21-30, AR. Deadline: April 8; May 20 (final). Annual fest accepting nonfiction film submissions for one of the country's premier nonfiction film celebrations. Noncompetitive fest honors films & filmmakers each yr. in beautiful Hot Springs Nat'l Park, Arkansas. More than 85 films are screened, incl. the current year's Academy Award nominees in nonfiction cats. Special guest scholars, filmmakers & celebrities participate in forums & lectures. Founded: 1992. Cats: doc. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, 1/2", DVD, Beta. Preview on VHS or DVD. Entry Fee: \$25-\$55. Contact: Darla Dixon, HSDFI; (501) 321-4747; fax: (501) 321-0211; ddixon@sdfi.org; www.hsdfi.org.

IFP MARKET, Sept. 18-23, NY. Deadline: May 2: narrative & No Borders scripts, works-in-progress (doc & narrative), shorts, docs; May 16 (final): shorts, docs, works-in-progress; features. Annual event is the longest-running U.S. market devoted to new, emerging film

talent. The market presents new film & TV works in development directly to the industry. Hundreds of financiers, distributors, buyers, development execs, fest programmers, & agents from the U.S. & abroad attend the IFP Market. Market filmmakers receive access to these industry executives via targeted networking meetings, pitch sessions, screenings, & more. Cats: feature, doc, work-in-progress, short, script. Awards: More than \$150,000 in cash & prizes awarded to emerging artists, incl. two \$10,000 Gordon Parks Awards for Emerging African-American filmmakers. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, Beta, DigiBeta, . Preview on VHS or DVD. Entry Fee: \$40-\$50 application fee; Registration fees (paid on acceptance only): \$200 - \$450. Contact: Pooja Kohli; (212) 465-8200; fax: 465-8525; marketreg@ifp.org; www.ifp.org.

LESBIAN LOOKS, Sept./Oct., AZ. Deadline: June 15. Fest seeks work of all lengths. Fee paid for all works screened. Incl. synopsis, brief artist bio & electronic still(s) w/ entry. Founded: 1993. Cats: short, doc, feature, experimental, any style or genre. Formats: 1/2", DVD. Preview on VHS (NTSC only). Entry Fee: \$10. Contact: Beverly Seckinger; (520) 621-1239; fax: 621-9662; bsecking@u.arizona.edu; lgbcom.web.arizona.edu/lobbydoor.html.

LONG ISLAND FILM FESTIVAL, June 21-23, NY. Deadline: April 30; May 31 (final). Annual competitive fest screens over 50 features & shorts submitted from around the world. Cats: feature, short, doc, student, experimental, animation. Awards: 1st prizes presented in all cats (film & video), w/ cash awards TBA. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, 3/4", 1/2", DVD. Preview on VHS. Entry Fee: \$25 (student; 0 to 15 min.); \$40 (15 to 30 min.); \$60 (30-60 min.); \$75 (over 60 min.). Contact: Chris Cooke; (631) 669-2717; fax: 853-4888; suffolkfilm@yahoo.com; www.lifilm.org.

LOS ANGELES INT'L SHORT FILM FESTIVAL (LA SHORTS FEST), Sept. 7-13, CA. Deadline: May 17; June 17 (final). Fest dubs itself "the largest short film fest in the world." Seeks Shorts, Features & Screenplays shorts (under 40 min.) & long shorts (40-60 min.), as well as feature-length works by directors who have

previously completed a short film in their career. Works must have been completed after Jan. 1 of previous year. Founded: 1997. Cats: Short, Animation, Doc, Exp., any style or genre, feature. Awards: Awards in "best of" cats. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, Beta SP, DigiBeta. Preview on VHS or DVD. Entry Fee: \$45-\$70. Robert Arentz, Founder & Festival Director ; (323) 851-9100; info@lashortsfest.com; www.lashortsfest.com.

MADCAT WOMEN'S INT'L FILM FESTIVAL, Sept., CA. Deadline: March 25; May 13 (final). MadCat showcases innovative & challenging works from around the globe. Fest features experimental, avant garde & independent works by women of all lengths & genres. Works can be produced ANY year. It is the fest's goal to expand the notion of women's cinema beyond the limitations of films about traditional women's issues. All topics/subjects will be considered. Founded: 1996. Cats: any style or genre. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, super 8, Beta SP, 1/2", Mini-DV. Preview on VHS or DVD. Entry Fee: \$10-\$30 (sliding scale, pay what you can afford). Contact: Festival; (415) 436-9523; fax: 934-0642; info@madcatfilmfestival.org; www.madcatfilmfestival.org.

MAINE STUDENT FILM & VIDEO FESTIVAL, July 23, ME. Deadline: June 1. The Festival sponsored by MAMA (Maine Alliance of Media Arts), is open to Maine residents 19 years of age & younger. Entries are accepted in all film & video formats & are divided into 3 cats: Pre-Teen Division (Grades K-5), Junior Division (Grades 6-8) & Senior Division (Grades 9-12). Founded: 1978. Cats: Any style or genre, Student. Awards: Senior Division Grand Prize Award is a \$2,000 Scholarship to the Young Filmmakers Program, Int'l Film & Television Workshop in association w/ Rockport College Rockport, Maine. Formats: DVD, Hi8, 1/2", Mini-DV. Preview on VHS or DVD. Entry Fee: None. Contact: Festival; (207) 773-1130; info@msfvf.com; www.msfvf.com.

MALIBU INT'L FILM FESTIVAL, Sept. 16-23, CA. Deadline: Jan. 1; June 1 (final). The Malibu Film Foundation, a California non-profit organization was founded to create, develop, & produce the Malibu Int'l Film Festival. The fest screens over forty independent fea-

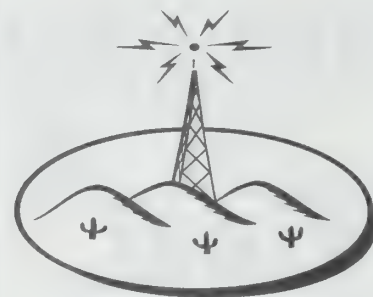
ture, short & documentary films from around the world. Founded: 1999. Cats: feature, short, doc, animation, script. Awards: Grand Prize; Directing Award; Audience Award (popular ballot); Cinematography Award; Screenwriter Award; Emerging Director Award. Formats: 16mm, 35mm, Beta, Beta SP, DigiBeta. Preview on VHS or DVD. Entry Fee: \$20 (early), \$30 (Mar. 1), \$40 (May 1), \$50 (final). Contact: Malibu Film Festival; (310) 452-1180; info@malibufilmfestival.org; www.malibufilmfestival.com.

OJAI FILM FESTIVAL, Oct. 20-23, CA. Deadline: June 1; July 1 (final). Theme: "Enriching the Human Spirit Through Film." Films & videos on all subjects in any genre are welcomed. Cats: feature, doc, short, animation, student, any style or genre. Awards: Best narrative feature & short; Doc feature & short; Animated film; Student film; Festival theme award. Formats: 35mm, Beta SP, Mini-DV, DV Cam. Preview on VHS (NTSC), DVD. Entry Fee: \$25-\$45. Contact: Steve Grumette, Artistic Director; (805) 649-4000; filmfestival@ojai.net; www.ojaifilmfestival.org.

PALM BEACH JEWISH FILM FESTIVAL, Dec. 1-11, FL. Deadline: March 1 (early), Aug. 20 (final). This fest aims to "speak to the world-wide Jewish experience." Cats: "Jewish films", any style or genre. Preview on VHS. Contact: Jewish Arts Foundation; pbjff@kaplanjcc.org; palmbeachjewishfilm.org.

REEL VENUS FILM FESTIVAL, July 20-22, NY. Deadline: April 15; May 13 (final). A showcase of Film/Video Shorts, 30 min. & under, all genres, directed & written by emerging & established women filmmakers from the United States & Abroad. Founded: 2003. Cats: any style or genre, short. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, Beta SP, DigiBeta, 1/2", DVD. Preview on VHS or DVD. Entry Fee: \$15; \$20 (final). Contact: Melissa Fowler, Festival Director; info@reelvenus.com; www.reelvenus.com.

RESFEST DIGITAL FILM FESTIVAL, Sept. - Dec., NY, CA, DC, IL, MA, OR. Deadline: April 15; May 13 (final). Annual nat'l/int'l touring fest seeks short films/videos exploring the dynamic interplay of film, art, music & design. The Fest showcases the best of the year's shorts,



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features, music videos, & animation along w/ screenings, live music events, parties, panel discussions, & tech demos. The underlying guideline for submissions is Innovation. The previous years the fest toured 30 plus cities int'lly. Cats: Doc, Experimental, Feature, Animation, music video, short. Formats: DV, Beta SP, 35mm, DigiBeta (preferred), Mini DV (NTSC). Preview on VHS, DVD, Beta SP (NTSC), Mini DV (NTSC). Entry Fee: \$20; \$25 (final). Contact: Festival; filmmaker @res fest.com; www.resfest.com.

RHODE ISLAND INT'L FILM FESTIVAL, Aug. 9-14, RI. Deadline: May 15, June 1 (final). Fest takes place in historic Providence, RI & has become a showcase for int'l independent filmmakers & their work. Fest is a qualifying fest in the Short Film category w/ the Academy of Motion Picture Arts & Sciences. Founded: 1997. Cats: feature, doc, short, animation, experimental, student, youth media, family, children. Awards: All films will be eligible for Audience Choice Awards. Formats: 16mm, 35mm, Beta SP, S-VHS, 1/2", DV, DVD. Preview on VHS or DVD. Entry Fee: \$40. Contact: George T. Marshall; (401) 861-4445; fax: 847-7590; flicksart@aol.com; www.rifilmfest.org.

SAN DIEGO ASIAN FILM FESTIVAL, Sept. 29-Oct. 2, CA. Deadline: April 1; May 14 (final). Annual competitive fest seeks short-to feature-length narratives, docs, experimental, animation & mixed-genre works made by or about Asian & Pacific Americans. Awards: Best Feature, Best Short, Best Doc, Best Experimental, Best Animation, Best Music Video, Jury award. Formats: 35mm, Beta SP. Preview on VHS (NTSC only). Entry Fee: \$25; \$35 (final). Contact: SDAFF; (858) 699-2717; entries@sdaff.org; www.sdaff.org.

SAN DIEGO FILM FESTIVAL, Sept. 21-25, CA. Deadline: June 1; July 1 (final). Festival hosts interactive panels & workshops, a nat'l screenwriting contest, filmmaker receptions & several star-studded, 'not to be missed' parties. Cats: feature, doc, short, any style or genre. Awards: Best feature, best short, best documentary, best actor & actress, best up & coming actor & actress, best screenplay, best cinematography, Achievement in Acting

Award. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, Beta SP, 1/2", DVD. Preview on VHS (NTSC), DVD. Entry Fee: \$35 (features/docs); \$25 (shorts); \$45 (features final); \$35 (shorts final). Contact: San Diego Film Foundation; (619) 582-2368; fax: 286-8324; info@sddf.org; www.sddf.org.

SEATTLE LESBIAN & GAY FILM FESTIVAL, Oct. 14-23, WA. Deadline: June 1; July a (final). The Pacific Northwest's premier queer film fest, committed to screening the best in lesbian, gay, bisexual & transgender film/video. Produced by Three Dollar Bill Cinema, whose mission is to provide community access to queer cinema & a venue for queer filmmakers to show their work. Founded: 1995. Cats: Feature, Short, Experimental, doc, animation. Awards: Jury selects best feature, documentary, short, new director & female director (\$500-\$1,000). Formats: 35mm, 16mm, 1/2", Beta SP. Preview on VHS or DVD. Entry Fee: \$10; \$15 (final). Contact: Jason Plourde; (206) 323-4274; fax: 323-4275; program ming@seattlequeerfilm.com; www.seattle queerfilm.com.

TELLURIDE FILM FESTIVAL, Sept. 2-5, CO. Deadline: May 1, June 15 (final). Annual fest, held in a Colorado mountain town, is a Labor Day weekend celebration commemorating the art of filmmaking: honoring the great masters of cinema, discovering the rare & unknown, bringing new works by the world's greatest directors & the latest in independent film. Cats: feature, short, student, any style or genre, doc, experimental. Awards: None. Formats: 16mm, 35mm, 3/4", 1/2", S-VHS, Beta, Beta SP, DigiBeta, Hi8, DV, DVD. Preview on VHS. Entry Fee: \$35 (19 min. or less); \$55 (20-39 min.); \$75 (40-59 min.); \$95 (60 min. & over); \$25 (student films, any length). Contact: Bill Pence / Tom Luddy; (603) 433-9202; fax: 433-9206; mail@telluridefilm festival.org; www.telluridefilmfestival.org.

TELLURIDE INDIEFEST, Aug. 31-Sept. 4, CO. Deadline: May 31. Fest dubs itself as "an int'l event showcasing the world's best indie films & screenplays, high in the mountains." Cats: feature, doc, any style or genre, short, script. Formats: Beta SP, 1/2", DVD. Preview on VHS or DVD. Entry Fee: \$40-\$55. Contact: Michael Carr; (970) 708-1529; fax: 292-4178;

festival@tellurideindiefest.com; www.tellurideindiefest.com.

UNITED NATIONS ASSOCIATION FILM FESTIVAL

Oct. 19-23, CA. Deadline: June 1. Int'l film fest held at Stanford University, showcases doc films & videos dealing w/ UN-related issues: human rights, women's issues, environmental survival, war & peace, etc. All genres & lengths eligible. Founded: 1998. Cats: any style or genre, doc, feature, short. Awards: Grand Jury Award, The Stanford Video Awards for Best Cinematography and Best Editing. Formats: 16mm, 1/2", 35mm, DV. Preview on VHS. Entry Fee: \$25 (up to 30 min.); \$35 (longer than 30 min.). Contact: Jasmina Bojic; (650) 725-5544; fax: 725-0011; info@unaff.org; www.unaff.org.

WOODSTOCK FILM FESTIVAL

Oct. 13-17, NY. Deadline: May 15; June 28 (final). Annual non-profit fest fosters an intimate, reciprocal relationship between indie filmmakers, industry reps & audience members held in "the most famous little town in the whole world". Celebrating new voices of indie film w/ seminars, workshops, concerts & parties. Cats: feature, doc, short, music video, animation, student. Awards: Best feature, doc, short, animation, cinematography, film score. Formats: 35mm, Beta SP, DigiBeta. Preview on VHS. Entry Fee: \$25-\$50. Contact: Meira Blaustein; (845) 679-4265; info@woodstockfilmfestival.com; www.woodstockfilmfestival.com.

YOUNG PEOPLE'S FILM & VIDEO FESTIVAL

July, OR. Deadline: June 6. Young People's Film & Video Festival is an annual juried survey of outstanding work by K-12 students from the Northwest (OR, WA, ID, MT, UT, AK). A jury reviews entries & assembles a program for public presentation. Judges' Certificates are awarded. About 20 films & videos are selected each year. Entries must have been made w/in previous 2 yrs. Founded: 1975. Cats: Student, any style or genre. Awards: Judges Certificates awarded. Formats: 16mm, S-8, 3/4", 1/2", Hi8, CD-ROM, S-VHS, Super 8, DV, Mini-DV, DVD. Preview on VHS. Entry Fee: None. Contact: Kristin Konsterlie, Festival Coordinator; (503) 221-1156; fax: 294-0874; kristin@nwfilm.org; www.nwfilm.org.

INTERNATIONAL

ANTIMATTER: UNDERGROUND FILM FESTIVAL

Sept. 16-24, Canada. Deadline: April 15; May 31 (final). Annual int'l fest seeks "imaginative, volatile, entertaining & critical" films & videos. Antimatter is "dedicated to cinema as art vs. product, regardless of the subversive or dangerous nature of its content, stylistic concerns or commercial viability". Selected works may be included in upcoming int'l tours. Industrial, commercial & studio products ineligible. Max 30 min., completed w/in past two years. Founded: 1998. Cats: any style or genre, short. Formats: 1/2", 16mm, DVD, Mini-DV, Super 8. Preview on VHS, DVD. Entry Fee: \$10; \$20 (final). Contact: Todd Eacrett, Director; (250) 385-3327; fax: 385-3327; info@antimatter.ws; www.antimatter.ws

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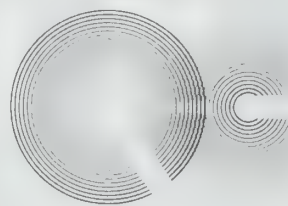
Nov. 11-28, Switzerland. Deadline: May 16. Biennial fest seeks artistic video works & artistic experimental films of all lengths & genres made in the previous year. Cats: any style or genre. Awards: \$15,000 in cash prizes. Formats: Beta SP, DVD, 16mm, 35mm, DV. Preview on VHS or DVD. Entry Fee: None. Contact: Centre for Contemporary Images; 011 41 22 908 2000; fax: 41 22 908 2001; cic@sgg.ch; www.centreimage.ch/bim.

BORDEAUX INT'L FESTIVAL OF WOMEN IN CINEMA

Oct. 3-9, France. Deadline: June 15 (shorts), July 31 (features). This Festival is designed & catered to the women filmmakers. The Festival aims to bring together innovative films from women & to recognize the achievements of female filmmakers. Cats: feature, short. Awards: Jury, Lifetime Achievement, & Cash awards.. Formats: 35mm, Beta SP Pal. Preview on VHS. Entry Fee: None. Contact: Festival Int'l du Cinema au Feminin; (011) 33 1 56 36 15 01; s.wiemann@cinemafeminin.com; www.cinemafeminin.com.

GUERNSEY FILM FESTIVAL

Oct. 7-9, United Kingdom. Deadline: May 31. Fest seeks amateur film & videos "made for love, w/ no financial reward & w/out professional assistance other than processing, copying, or sound transfer." Works must be 30 min. or less.



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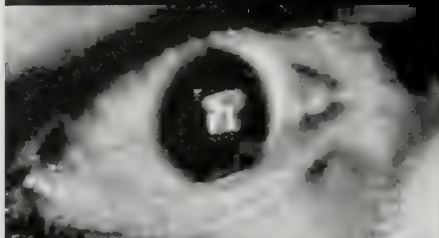
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Cats: short. Awards: The winners of the following amateur cats receive awards: Photography, Editing, Use of sound, Script, Fiction, Youth Entry, Animation, Doc, Acting Performance, Comedy. The Best Film in the Festival receives a special award & there are five runners up. The Open Section awards for First, Second, & Third places. Formats: super 8, 8mm, 16mm, S-VHS, 1/2" (PAL), DV, Mini-DV. Preview on VHS. Entry Fee: \$10. Contact: Peter & Mary Rouillard; 011 44 1481-238-147; fax: 011 44 1481-235-989; rouillard@cwgsy.net; www.guernseylily.com.

INT'L ORNITHOLOGICAL FILM FESTIVAL, Oct. 27-Nov. 1, France. Deadline: June 1. Annual fest shows about 40 films concerning ornithological subjects, as well as all wildlife (wild mammals, reptiles or swimming creatures). Associations & orgs concerned w/ environmental issues invited to present activities in various forums. Regional tours organized each day specifically in bird watching areas & children's activities around ornithological subjects are held. 25-30 artists present photographs, paintings & sculpture. Entries must be French premieres. Founded: 1985. Cats: wildlife/environmental, doc, short. Awards: Cash awards. Formats: Beta SP. Preview on DVD. Entry Fee: None. Contact: Marie Christine Brouard; 011 33 5 49 69 90 09; fax: 33 5 49 69 97 25; mainate@menigoute-festival.org; www.menigoute-festival.org.

INVIDEO, Nov. 9-13, Italy. Deadline: June 17. Formats: Beta SP, DVD. Preview on VHS. Entry Fee: None. Contact: A.I.A.C.E./INVIDEO; 011 39 2 761 153 94; fax: 752 801 19; www.mostrainvideo.com.

LOCARNO INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL, August 3-13, Switzerland. Deadline: June 15. This major Swiss cultural/cinematic all-feature event, is known for its innovative programming & support of alternative visions from independent directors. Program, in addition to competition & Piazza Grande screenings, incl. video competition, Filmmakers of the Present, retrospective section, sidebar sections, new Swiss cinema & film market. Presenting over 400 prods shown each year, the Festival receives a large amount of publicity by the int'l press. Founded: 1948. Cats:

feature, doc, short, animation, experimental, student. Awards: Golden Leopard; Grand Prix of the City of Locarno. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, Beta. Preview on VHS. Entry Fee: None. Contact: Irene Bignardi, Festival Director; 011 41 91 756 2121; fax: 41 91 756 2149; info@pardo.ch; www.pardo.ch.

MALESCORTO, Aug. 4-10, Italy. Deadline: June 1. This fest brings together representatives from the world of local culture & professionals from the television sector & showcases shorts from filmmakers around the world. Cats: short, doc, children. Awards: Jury & cash awards. Formats: 35mm, 16mm. Preview on VHS. Entry Fee: None. Contact: Mauro Colnaghi; info@malescorto.it; www.malelescorto.it.

MILANO FILM FESTIVAL, September 10-19, Italy. Deadline: May 31. Annual fest invites features films & shorts (under 45 min.) from anyone who'd like to "invent, build, & destroy new ideas of cinema." Cats: any style or genre, feature, doc, short, animation, experimental, music video, student. Awards: Awards incl. Aprile Award. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, 8mm, DV, Beta SP, 1/2". Preview on VHS. Entry Fee: none. Contact: Festival; 011 39 02 713 613; info@milanofilmfestival.it; www.milanofilmfestival.it.

MORBEGNO FILM FESTIVAL, Sept. 21-25, Italy. Deadline: May 2. This Festival aims to recognize the creativity of filmmakers & to offer the public of the Province of Sondrio the visions of others w/ respect to distribution into the commercial market. Cats: short, feature, doc. Awards: Cash awards. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, Super 8, analog & digital video. Preview on VHS or DVD. Entry Fee: None. Contact: Associazione Culturale Zert; mff@zert.it; www.zert.it.

MOVING PICTURES FESTIVAL OF DANCE ON FILM & VIDEO, Nov. 3-6, Canada. Deadline: May 30. Fest invites filmmakers, choreographers & dance artists to submit film & video. This event is dedicated to exploring the intersections of dance & the camera. Rough cuts will be considered if accompanied by a detailed description & schedule for completion. Cats: feature, doc, short, experimental,

animation, TV, installation. Awards: Grand Prize for Best Filmmaker. Formats: 16mm, 35mm, Beta SP, 1/2", super 8. Preview on VHS. Entry Fee: \$20 CDN; \$30 US & Int'l. Contact: Kathleen Smith, Executive Director; (416) 961-5424; fax: 961-5624; info@moving-picturesfestival.com; www.movingpicturesfestival.com.

PESARO FILM FESTIVAL, June 24-July 2, Italy. Deadline: May 7. Annual fest's "New Cinema" program. Production req. Italian premiere, completion after Jan. 1 of previous year. If not English or French spoken or subtitled, enclose dialogue list in either language. Founded: 1964. Cats: feature, short, doc, experimental, animation features. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, Betacam, 3/4". Preview on VHS. Entry Fee: None. Contact: Fondazione Pesaro Nuovo Cinema; 011 39 06 445 6643; fax: 49 11 63; pesarofilmfest@mcclink.it; www.pesarofilmfest.it.

PLANET FOCUS: TORONTO ENVIRONMENTAL FILM FESTIVAL, Sept. 28-Oct. 2, Canada. Deadline: April 1; May 2. Fest pays special consideration to works that push the boundaries of the accepted notions of 'environment'; works that present cultural perspectives that are under-represented in Canada & works that will have their world or Canadian premiere at fest. Cats: any style or genre. Entry Fee: \$15; \$20 (final). Contact: Festival; (416) 531-1769; info@planetinfocus.org; www.planetinfocus.org.

SALENTO INT'L FILM FESTIVAL, Sept. 10-18, Italy. Deadline: March 30; June 10 (final). This Festival promotes Italian & int'l independent films to the public, in recognition of the fact that movies are the most powerful form of cultural communication & link between cultures & peoples. Cats: feature, doc, short. Awards: Grand Jury awards. Formats: 35mm. Preview on VHS. Entry Fee: \$30 (shorts); \$50 (features). Contact: SIFF; (818) 248-2349; fax: 248-1647; info@salentofilmfestival.com; www.salentofilmfestival.com.

SHEFFIELD INT'L DOC FESTIVAL, Oct. 10-16, UK. Deadline: June 1. Festival is "firmly established as one of the premier int'l events for documentary." Combining a program of ses-

sions & masterclasses covering all issues pertinent to documentary. Founded: 1994. Cats: doc, short, student, TV, feature. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, Beta, Beta SP. Preview on VHS (PAL only) or DVD. Entry Fee: None. Contact: Emma Ryan; 011 44 114 276 5141; fax: 44 114 272 1849; emma@sidf.co.uk; www.sidf.co.uk.

ST. JOHN'S INT'L WOMEN'S FILM & VIDEO FESTIVAL, October 18-22, Canada. Deadline: May 31. Festival seeks films & videos made by women. Founded: 1989. Cats: Experimental, Animation, Feature, Doc. Awards: Non-competitive. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, Beta, DVD, 1/2". VHS. Entry Fee: \$25. Contact: Program Committee; (709) 754-3141; fax: (709) 754-3143; womensfilm fest@nfl.net; www.womensfilm festival.com.

VANCOUVER INT'L FILM FESTIVAL, Sept. 29-Oct. 14, Canada. Deadline: June 15 (Canadian); July 5 (Int'l). Fest presents 300 films from 50 countries at 8 cinemas over 16 days & has become one of N. America's largest int'l fests (after Montreal & Toronto). Fest accepts Canadian shorts & features but only feature films from outside Canada that have not been screened commercially or broadcast in British Columbia. Founded: 1982. Cats: any style or genre, doc, feature, short. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, 70mm, 3/4", 1/2", Beta, Beta SP, DigiBeta, DV, DVD. Preview on VHS. Entry Fee: \$50 (\$30 U.S., non-Canadian only). Contact: PoChu AuYeung, Program Manager; (604) 685-0260; fax: 688-8221; viff@viff.org; www.viff.org.

VENICE INT'L FILM FESTIVAL, Aug. 31-Sept. 10, Italy. Deadline: June 30. Fest is one of the most prestigious w/ several int'l sections. Founded: 1932. Cats: feature, doc, short, animation, retro. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, Beta SP, Experimental sections also accepts BVU & Betacam video, DigiBeta. Preview on VHS. Entry Fee: None. Contact: La Biennale di Venezia Dept. of Cinema; 011 390 41 521 8711; fax: 390 41 522 7539; cinema@labiennale.org; www.labiennale.org.



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THE CINEMA GUILD, leading film/video/multi-media distributor, seeks new doc, fiction, educational & animation programs for distribution. Send videocassettes or discs for evaluation to: The Cinema Guild, 130 Madison Ave., 2nd fl., New York, NY 10016; (212) 685-6242; info@CINEMAGUILD.COM; Ask for our Distribution Services brochure.

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DHTV, a progressive, nonprofit community

media center and tv station in St. Louis, MO seeks works by indie producers. Half hour and 1 hour lengths. S-VHS accepted, DVD preferred. Non-exclusive rights release upon acceptance. No pay but exposure to 60,000 cable households. Contact Mariah Richardson, dhTV, 625 N. Euclid, St. Louis, Mo 63108, (314) 361-8870 x230, mariah@dhtv.org.

REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS FILM FESTIVAL

RIGHTS! Camera! Action! is a new, annual event celebrating reproductive health & rights at grassroots organizations and universities nationwide. Films on abortion, birth control, reproductive technologies, sex ed & GLBTQ issues eligible. Entry deadline July 1st. Contactsubmit@rightscameraaction.net or InCite 347 W 36th St Ste 901, NY, NY 10018. Submissions cannot be returned.

THE QUITTAPAHILLA FILM FESTIVAL is looking

for features, shorts and documentaries for its Sept. 30-Oct 2, 2005 juried festival. See full details for entry at our website: qfilms.org. Send submissions on VHS or DVD to: Attn. QFF, c/o The Allen Theatre, 36 E. Main Street, Annville, PA 17003. Postmark entries by July 1, 2005. Entree fee is \$25.

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FAIR



WAS (IS) A BOOK.

Before the movie was an official selection of the 2005 Sundance Film Festival, and before the radio story hit the airwaves, *Fair* was (is) a hand-bound edition of 40 books. The books are bound dos-a-dos and divided into two sections: DAY and NIGHT. Each section contains a cd of ambient sounds that correspond to a sequence of video stills from the Brockton Fair.

Every fair is essentially two fairs: one sunny and bright, full of cuddly animals and babies; the other dark and ambiguously dangerous, more grown-up and aggressive. The text at the beginning of each section is inspired by the tone of the imagery and the sounds found in that section. The overall effect is at once personal and exotic. The form of the object is *book*, but strangely so. The subject is one we all know, yet it is one that we have mythologized into a (somewhat treacherous) fantasy world of oddballs, oddities, misfits, and shysters. We know what to expect at the fair; we are delighted when we find it. Turning the pages of the video stills, hearing the sounds, feels, in the words of one viewer, "like reading a movie."

Like its namesake, *Fair* contains elements of familiarity and surprise, as the artist re-creates the fair experience visually, aurally, and **structurally** in the book. Each section contains one popup designed and constructed by the artist, and there are several flyouts and pull-downs for the reader to unfold and peek inside. The artwork on each cd, the covers, and the spines of the books is stenciled and stamped by hand, making each book unique, and the cover paper, book cloth, and paint combinations vary.



To determine pricing and availability, post your inquiry directly to the artist:

Jason Rayles
435 Broadway #403
Brooklyn, NY 11211

or telephone 718 388 3802
or electronic mail fair@23grand.com

for more information, see <http://23grand.com>

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WEB

POST YOUR FILM TRAILER, demo reel, video resume on your website and/or send them via E-mail to any e-mail address. Great marketing tool! \$.05 per viewing minute. Call or e-mail Tom Aguilar at (480) 459-1114 or visit my website for more info.

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NOTICES

Noncommercial notices are listed free of charge as space permits. *The Independent* reserves the right to edit for length and makes no guarantees about duration of listing. Limit submissions to 60 words and indicate how long your information will be current. Listings must be submitted to notices@aivf.org by the first of the month two months prior to cover date (e.g., Sept. 1 for Nov issue). Remember to give us complete contact info (name, address, and phone number). Listings do not constitute an endorsement by *The Independent* or AIVF. We try to be as current and accurate as possible, but nevertheless, double-check details before sending anyone anything.

Lindsay Gelfand

COMPETITIONS

2005 SANTA BARBARA SCRIPT COMPETITION

seeks submissions. Entry fee \$40. Grand Prize \$2000 Option, First Prize \$750. All winners will also receive screenwriting related books, materials and or software. Special Cash Award for Regional Writer to be awarded to a South Coast Resident. (Santa Barbara, Ventura, San Luis Obispo counties in California). Regular submission deadline is June 30th and late is July 31. Contact: Geoff@santabarbarascript.com.

BUSINESS FILMS ELAN announces new screenplay contest: \$1000 Feature-length Screenplay Contest —Deadline: June 15, 2005 — Entry is free and winning films will be slotted for production. For more information and submission guidelines, www.businessfilm.com/businessfilmelan.html.

GLOBAL ENTERTAINMENT & MEDIA SUMMIT

2005: New York City: May 14-15, 2005. A lively and engaging forum of people with vision from the independent and mainstream music, film, video and multimedia worlds of the entertainment, media, and communications industries. People connect with people, exchanging ideas and creating projects in a context of innovation, reinvention, and possibility. Together, this community is proactively effecting new ways to achieve sustainable careers and the direction of the revolution now taking place in marketing and distribution. For more information visit www.globalentertainmentnetwork.com.

THE EXPERIMENTAL TELEVISION CENTER INTERNATIONAL RESIDENCY 2005

is a collaborative video and sonic arts course, sponsored by the Institute for Electronic Arts (IEA) and accredited through the School of Art and Design at Alfred University, for professionals and both undergraduate and graduate students May 25–June 5, 2005. Activities include daily tech lectures on equipment operation, with lab times for independent and collaborative art-making. Registration is limited. There is a fee. For additional information and registration contact Pam Hawkins hawkin.sp@alfred.edu.

RESOURCES FUNDS

FUNDING FOR INDIE PRODUCTIONS: LOCAL

INDEPENDENTS COLLABORATING with STATIONS (LinCS) from Independent Television Service (ITVS) provides matching funds up to \$100,000 for collaborations between public TV stations and indie producers. Projects may be in any stage of development and all genres are eligible, including documentary, drama, animation and innovative combinations. Only single shows, 26:40 or 56:40, are eligible. Programs should stimulate civic discourse and find innovative ways to explore regional, cultural, political, social or economic issues. Indie film and videomakers are encouraged to seek collaborations with local public TV stations. Deadline: May 26, 2005. Guidelines and applications at www.itvs.org, or call Elizabeth Meyer (415) 356-8383 x270; Elizabeth_Meyer@itvs.org.

GLOBAL CENTER, a nonprofit, IRS-certified 501(c)(3) educational foundation, seeks filmmakers seeking fiscal sponsors. For more info, call (212) 246-0202, or email roc@globalvision.org; www.globalvision.org.

MEDIA ARTS TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE FUND

is designed to help non-profit media arts programs in New York State stabilize, strengthen or restructure their media arts organizational capacity, services and activities. The fund will provide up to \$2,000 per project to organizations which receive support from NYSCA's Electronic Media and Film program. The Media Arts Technical Assistance fund can assist with the hiring of consultants or other activities

THE CIVILIANS

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American Theatre Magazine

"Those craving musical wit and sophistication have to look to the cheeky art songs of Michael Friedman, the resident composer of The Civilians."

Time Out New York

"A collective like the Civilians, which was created by some extraordinarily talented actors and equally talented directors, provides new venues for fresh writing. Cross-fertilization is everywhere."

The Village Voice

"In our hectic modern world there are many ways to lose things, and many things to lose: the will to live, the plot, a war. These and others are explored in the UK debut of *Gone Missing* by the acclaimed New York company The Civilians."

The Times of London

Check out The Civilians and see what independent theater is all about!
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which contribute to organizational, management and programming issues which influence the media arts activities. Contact Sherry Miller Hocking, Program Director at Experimental Television Center deadlines for application are July 1, and October 1.

NEW YORK FOUNDATION FOR THE ARTS, in collaboration with arts councils and cultural organizations across New York State, is offering Special Opportunity Stipends (SOS) designed to help individual artists of all disciplines take advantage of unique opportunities that will significantly benefit their work or career development. Literary, media, visual, music and performing artists may request support ranging from \$100 to \$600 for specific, forthcoming opportunities that are distinct from work in progress. Please note: SOS is only available to artists NOT living in the five boroughs of New York City. For further information, please contact Shawn Miller, by phone at (212) 366-6900 x350 or by email at smiller@nyfa.org.

PACIFIC ISLANDERS IN COMMUNICATIONS (PIC) OPEN DOOR COMPLETION FUNDS are provided for the final preparations of broadcast masters of PacificIslander-themed programs intended for national public television. Categories: doc, performance, children's & cultural affairs programming. PIC is particularly interested in projects that examine & illuminate realities of Pacific Islander issues such as but not limited to diversity, identity, & spirituality. A full-length rough cut must be submitted w/ application. Awards up to \$50,000. Deadline: ongoing. Contact: Gus Cobb-Adams, Media Fund, PIC, 1221 Kapi'olani Blvd. 6A-4, Honolulu, HI 96814; Tel.: (808) 591-0059 x 16; fax: 591-1114; gcobb-adams@piccom.org; applications available at www.piccom.org.

TEXAS FILMMAKERS' PRODUCTION FUND: is an annual grant awarded to emerging film & video artists who are residents of Texas. Grants range from \$1,000 to \$15,000 for regionally produced projects for any genre. In Sept. the Fund will award \$75,000 in grants ranging from \$1,000-\$15,000. Deadline: June 1. Appl. avail. at Texas Filmmakers' Production Funds, 1901 East 51st St., Austin, TX 78723; (512) 322-0145 or www.austinfilm.org.

THE SEVENTH GENERATION FUND provides technical assistance in the form of workshops, conferences, training, and grant funding for

projects. Small grants range from \$600 to \$10,000 per year in assistance to seed an emerging organization, to help cover the general operation costs of an existing organization or specific project, or to cover related expenses that help a project accomplish its work and fulfill its mission in the community; Training & Technical Assistance Financial support of \$600 to \$5,000 per year to facilitate project-specific training, pay for experts/special consultants, and /pr provide for other capacity building needs. (Training and Technical Assistance grants are also available for projects to acquire new skills through regional workshops, national forums, and special conferences); and mini-grants are offered from \$50 to \$500. For more information, www.7genfund.org. Deadline is: June 1, September 1, 2005.

MICROCINEMAS SCREENINGS

4TH ANNUAL BARE BONES SCRIPT-2-SCREEN FEST & SCREENWRITERS CONFERENCE in Tulsa, OK is looking for independent screenwriters & filmmakers to enter competition in variety of categories: feature screenplays & movies, short movies & screenplays, teleplays, trailers, doc., animation, actor monologues, Shoot 'N OK location micro-screenplay will get produced. Submission Deadline for the Festival, which will take place between October 13-16 is July 31, 2005. For more details email script2screenfest@yahoo.com or visit www.script2screenfilmfestival.com.

DOCUCUB'S IN-THE WORKS PROGRAM offers filmmakers a safe environment to screen a rough-cut of their documentaries before an audience of their peers and lovers of the form. The audience is encouraged to give constructive feedback about the structure, content, characters and clarity of the film in a post-screening discussion facilitated by an experienced filmmaker. A cheese and wine reception will follow to give everyone a chance to network. Submission requirements can be found on our website at <http://docuclub.org/filmdirectory/submissions.html> If you have any questions please email David at mail@docuclub.org or call (212) 582-3055.

MICROCINEMA'S INDEPENDENT EXPOSURE

2005, an ongoing microcinema screening program of international short films, videos & digital works has been presented hundreds of times in 35 countries and Antarctica and 2005 is its tenth season. Seeking short video, film & digital media submissions of 15 min. or less on ongoing basis for ongoing screening and touring program. Artists qualify for a nonexclusive distribution deal. Looking for short narrative, alternative, humorous, dramatic, erotic, animation, etc. Submit DVD or VHS (NTSC/PAL) labeled w/ name, title, length, phone # & support materials, incl. photos. Submissions will not be returned. Contact: Joel S. Bachar, Microcinema International, 531 Utah St., San Francisco, CA 94110; info@microcinema.com; www.microcinema.com.

POTHOLE PICTURES, a 420-seat movie house in Shelburne Falls, MA, seeks films for "Meet the Filmmaker" series, which features a discussion & reception following your film's screening. Any length/genre. Format: 35mm, DVD or VHS. Connection to New England through subject matter, filming locations, or hometown of filmmakers, helpful but not necessary. Send VHS or DVD preview to Fred DeVecca, Pothole Pictures, Box 368, Shelburne Falls, MA 01370; frogprod@skywayusa.com.

THE IDEA WORKSHOP is an intimate pitching session where accepted filmmakers pitch their ideas to industry representatives who, in turn, provide feed back on the strength of the pitch and the potential markets for the film's subject matter. This way, they get to practice their pitch, and the audience gets a sense of how this all-important facet of documentary funding and production happens as well. Submission requirements can be found on our website at <http://docuclub.org/filmdirectory/submissions.html> If you have any questions please email David at mail@docuclub.org or call (212) 582-3055.

TIMEBASE, a new moving image series in Kansas City, seeks innovative short films, videos, installations & web-based projects. No entry fee. Rolling deadline. Send VHS, DVD, or CD-Rom: Timebase, 5100 Rockhill Rd Haag 202, KC MO 64110. Tel: (816) 235-1708; www.time-base.org.

GALLERIES EXHIBITIONS

EASTERN STATE PENITENTIARY HISTORIC SITE in PA seeks artists for exhibition at the site. Some funding avail. for media arts. Proposals are reviewed annually each fall. See website for info/deadline. To request an application, or schedule an orientation tour, contact Brett Bertolino at (215) 236-5111 ex. 12, or at bb@EasternState.org, or visit www.easternstate.org.

TOURING PROGRAMS

FREE FORM FILM FESTIVAL is a year-round touring event created by loaf-i.com and inner mission productions is now taking submissions. Seeking films/videos of all formats and genres (but please submit on NTSC VHS for initial consideration). The FFFF brings an eclectic collection of innovative films to cities and towns across the United States. Enter now to be considered for our west coast tour in September. Enter anytime for other tours/exhibitions. The FFFF is non-competitive, but offers opportunity for screenings all over the U.S. Entry fee is \$15 for residents of the U.S. and Canada. There is no entry fee for residents of other countries. See freeformfilm.org for details and entry forms.

REALITY BITES, the unique restaurant/ screening room launched by renowned documentarian Steven M. Manin, is currently accepting submissions of original content of any and all genres/lengths for exhibition. Reality Bites is located in Nyack, NY. For more info, call 845.358.8800, or visit www.realitybites.net.

BROADCASTS CABLECASTS

HENDERSON TELEVISION (HTV), Henderson State University's cablecast network seeks short films of all genres to screen as part of its weekly television programming. Student projects are given priority, but everyone is encouraged to submit their work. Send contact information, filmmaker's bio, a brief description of the work and a VHS, SVHS, DV or DVD copy to: HTV, 1100 Henderson Street, HSU Box 7582, Arkadelphia, AR, 71999. (870) 230-5215.



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WORK WANTED

Lindsay Gelfand

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AQUARIUS HEALTH CARE MEDIA is expanding our list of quality award winning videos/DVD's on Life Challenges. We have a strong interest in programs on aging, caregiving, teen/youth issues, disabilities, chronic disease, complementary therapies and mental health issues. Visit www.aquariusproductions.com and email brief synopses to lbk@aquariusproductions.com or contact Aquarius Health Care Videos at 888-440-2963, 18 No Main St, Sherborn, MA 01770.

CAPE COD FILM SOCIETY SCREENING SERIES of Brewster, MA, seeks films & videos of all types on an ongoing basis. Films can be any length, genre or style, but should be the type of work that will stimulate discussion, as well as entertaining a general adult audience. We hold several screenings a year, including a short film competition each spring, and generally ask filmmakers to present their work in person. There are no fees and some screenings include a nominal honorarium. Please send work on VHS, DVD, or mini-DV w/ filmmaker bio and synopsis. Also indicate your availability to appear with your work for Q&A. Send to: Rebecca M. Alvin, Cape Cod Film Society Series, PO Box 1727, Brewster, MA 02631-7727. For more info, visit www.geocities.com/capecodfilm or filmsociety@comcast.net

MADCAT seeks provocative and visionary films and videos directed or co-directed by women. Films can be of any length or genre

and produced ANY year. MadCat is committed to showcasing work that challenges the use of sound and image and explores notions of visual story telling. All subjects/topics will be considered. Submission Fee: \$10-30 sliding scale. Pay what you can afford. For an entry form and more details go to www.madcatfilmfestival.org or call 415 436-9523. Preview Formats: VHS or DVD. Exhibition Formats: 35mm, 16mm, Super8, Beta SP, Mini DV, VHS. All entries must include a SASE for return of materials. Early Deadline: March 25, 2005. Final Deadline: May 13, 2005.

MINDJACK DIGITAL STUDIOS is seeking submissions for their new show called Independent Axis, which showcases independent art: shorts primarily and videos, trailers, web short, flash animation and artists showcase. Submissions are free of charge and will be broadcast to a possible 80,000 households on a NBC affiliate. You can find out more information about the show or us at www.mindjack.com.

URBAN MEDIAMAKERS FILM FESTIVAL 2005 is accepting submissions for the 4th Annual Urban Mediamakers Film Festival to be held in Atlanta, Georgia, October 14-16, 2005. All genres accepted including short, feature, and documentaries on VHS and DVD (DVD copies must include a VHS as well). Deadline for submissions is August 1, 2005 with a entry fee of \$10. Please mail a VHS/DVD copy of your film and include a synopsis of the film, length of film, a short bio and resume of the director/producer/writer. Also include press materials if they are available. Mail all entries to: Urban Mediamakers Film Festival 2005, PMB 315, 1353 Riverstone Parkway, Suite 120, Canton, Georgia 30114, Attention: Festival Coordinator. For more information visit www.urbanmediamakers.com or call 770.345.8048.

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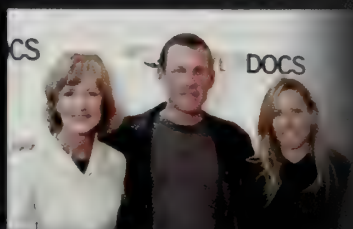




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THE LIST

WHAT HAS CHANGED (OR NOT) IN INDIE FILM?

By Lindsay Gelfand

Given that the perception of "independent film" has evolved in recent years, we posed the following questions to our favorite filmmakers this month: What are the things about independent film that will never change? Or should never change?

"The spirit of independent cinema rests in the auteur's willingness to go to whatever lengths needed to get the story told in the way that serves the story, not popular appeal. This, to me, is truly independent cinema."

—Genevieve Anderson, writer/director

"We'll never be able to get distribution unless we sucker a star into an "Oscar" role, make a film with chainsaws and severed arteries, or borrow more money to pay for a team of PR execs and producers reps to get us into Sundance. But what the hell, we'll still have our vision, our integrity, and our dream. Hopefully that will never change."

—Stacey Childers, producer/director,
Delivery Boy Chronicles

"Independent film is and always will be about the passion to tell a certain story. That passion goes beyond focus groups and marketing which may come later, but a true indie's lifeblood stems from a writer, director, or producer's obsession to make, by any means necessary, their film, their way."

—Kyle Schickner, writer-director, *Strange Fruit*,
Fencesitter Films

"Independent film still allows a writer-director's vision to get to the screen with less interference from studio executives justifying their salaries. So, basically, less hands in the cookie jar... 'cause we really like our cookies."

—Michael Irpino & Joe Dietl, writer-directors,
The Thin Pink Line

"The main thing about independent film that will never change is the freedom that it offers. By the pure definition of independence it offers you to make the decisions and in the making of a film that is huge. The worst thing about having to

answer to someone is the giving up of control. As a writer, a producer, an actor, and a director, true independence assures me that the vision I set out to make will become a reality."

—Dave West, writer-director *Puddlejumper*
and *The Do Over*, Sandbox Pictures

"Independent filmmaking should always embody the spirit of the auteur, whether it's DIY or guerilla style. It should be small, lightweight, and turn-on-a-dime agile in getting risk-taking and highly original ideas onto film or video. No bloat and safety net here."

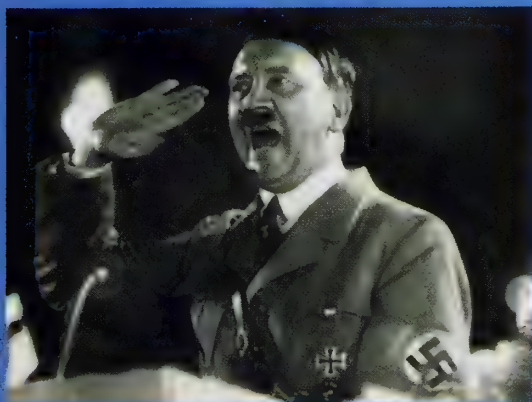
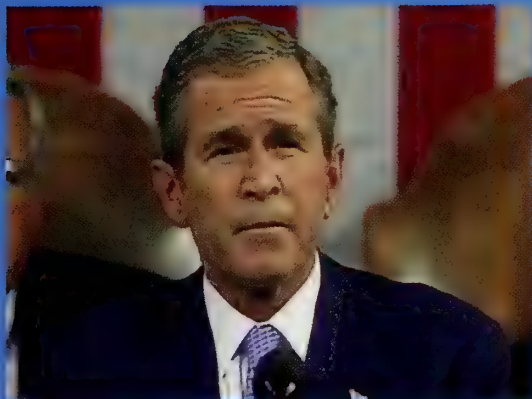
—Sam Chen, director/ animator, *Eternal Gaze*

"The only thing about independent film I can honestly say hasn't and should never change is the strength, clarity, and diversity of the voice (and voices) that create it. Without those voices, the kinds of stories that touch you, change you, and impact you directly would never exist. To my mind, that's the heart of independent film, regardless of how it is packaged and made."

—Eli Brown, director/editor,
Marry Me: Stories from the San Francisco Weddings

"I think what will never change about independent film is that there will always be hundreds of people, some of them talented, and some of them not, who are compelled, for better or for worse, to share their vision and art with the world. What should, and I would imagine, never will change, is that independent cinema has been and will be free from commercial influences, the absurd 'trend' following studio impulses or doctrines and the heavy hand of product placement and corporate governance. Independent cinema will always have room to be fresh and free, and unique in its vision and combined images."

—Orly Ravid, film distributor/grass roots marketer,
Baise Moi



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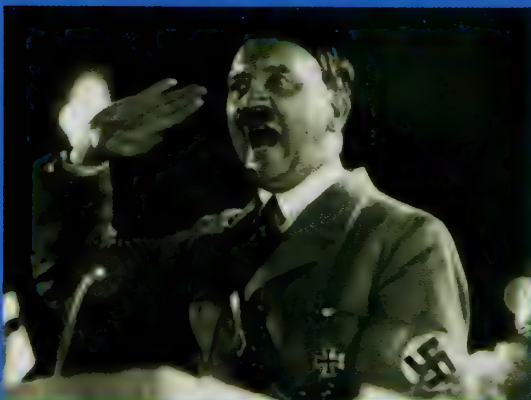
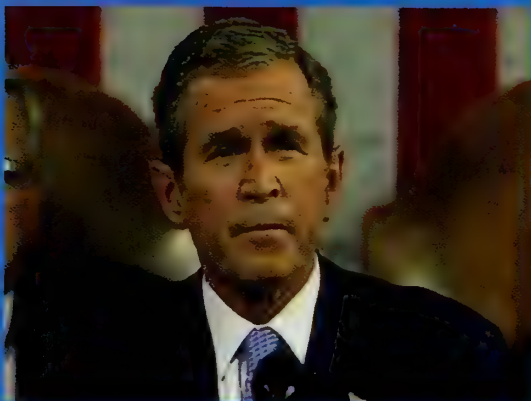
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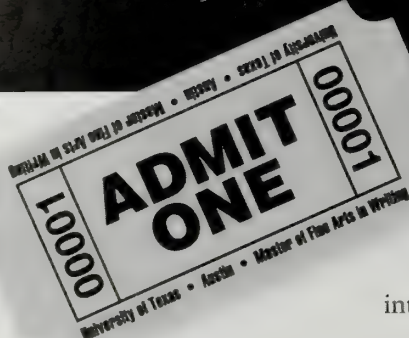
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The Diverse Voices Project II, with up to \$80,000 in coproduction funding available to emerging filmmakers, is P.O.V.'s initiative to support stories about diverse communities* produced by emerging makers. Guidelines for applying to the Diverse Voices Project II are available for review at www.pbs.org/pov/dvp

*Please visit the P.O.V. website for eligibility requirements.

The submission deadline for the 2006 Season and DVP II is July 1, 2005

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Rebecca Carroll [Editor-in-Chief]

EDITOR'S LETTER

Dear Readers,

I got married in April. Leading up to the wedding on April 23, after a considerable amount of feigned indifference in getting our announcement into *The New York Times* Style section (solely on my part—everyone else, my husband and parents included, was genuinely disinterested), I decided to submit our information for consideration. To be perfectly honest, I couldn't imagine they wouldn't call us immediately upon receipt of it—it's a great story that includes, among other distinctively New York-ish details, my fiancé and I meeting on a subway platform.

The call from the "Vows" editor involved some questions. Like: Was my uncle who officiated the ceremony an ordained minister or had he received special privileges to conduct the ceremony? Well, actually, I told him, my fiancé and I got legally married at City Hall a few weeks before and this is just the wedding part—no one else knows, though, so it's like the real thing. "Oh, no," the editor said, with what I could've sworn was contempt. "Yeah, no, we don't do that." He proceeded to tell me in curt and explicit terms that under no circumstances did *The New York Times* publish wedding announcements on or about any other day but the official wedding date. "But it's a great story!" I thought—somewhat feverishly.

This is probably how many of you feel when you don't get into Sundance, or another of the higher profile festivals—you don't want to want it as much as you do, but you do (in fact, quite often there's a clear-minded assumption on your part

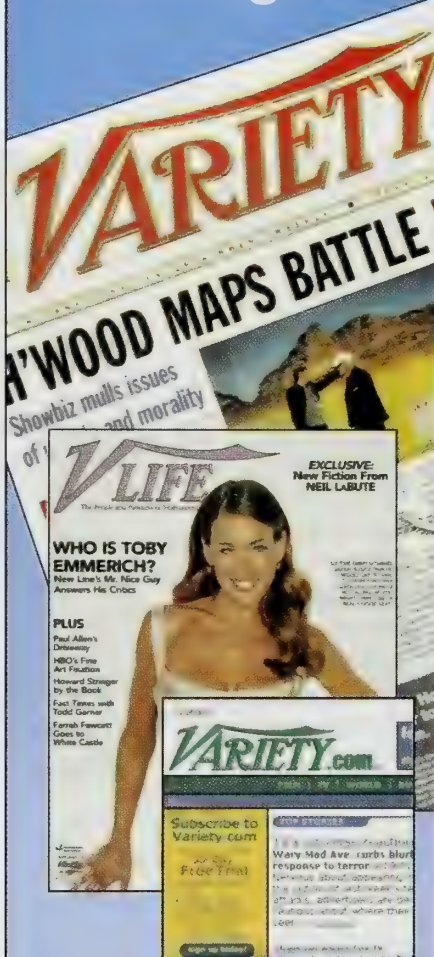
that you will get in). And then if you don't get in, you immediately get righteous as hell about your film being the best film on the planet and absolutely custom made for that particular festival. I think this feeling, this knee jerk reaction, is especially true for artists or those who perhaps fancy themselves somewhat above, beyond, or over mainstream conventions. Luckily, in the end, there are many outlets and people out there that will still have you—that will allow you your personal outbursts and self-important theories on what makes a great story, great film, and great art.

Places like the hi/lo film festival in San Francisco, for which the programmers "strive to put films before audiences that illustrate how liberating a small budget can be" (page 22); Peripheral Produce and its annual Portland Documentary and Experimental Film Festival (page 44); and of course, the many and varied service organizations spread across the country with the singular intent to help you do what you need and want to do in the best and most creative way possible—AIVF among them, and by extension, this magazine (page 36). There are people like Bradley Beasley, whose documentary as love letter to the magnificent alt-rock band The Flaming Lips, *The Fearless Freaks*, is gorgeously inspired (page 40). And believe it or not, the eBay guy, Jeff Skoll, who while new to the film industry is not so bid-driven that he can't appreciate that "the world of independent film is a little bit freer of that kind of commercial, mass-market influence that guides so many studios" (page 48).

Also in this issue, On the Scene with Elvis Mitchell (page 32), who I'm always happy to see at various festivals and industry events, and who is busy these days with a new development gig at Columbia Pictures and guest curating the LA Film Festival this month.

Enjoy, and thanks for reading
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Rebecca Carroll

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Jessica Edwards

DAVID ALM teaches film history and writing at two colleges in Chicago. His writing has appeared in *Arbyte*, *Camenawork*, *RES*, *Silicon Alley Reporter*, *SOMA*, and the *The Utne Reader*. He's also contributed to books on web design and digital filmmaking and assisted in making documentaries about architecture and garbage.

ELIZABETH ANGELL is a freelance writer living in New York. She recently received an MFA in creative writing from Columbia and is at work on her first book.

LISA SELIN DAVIS is the author of the novel, *Belly*, which is forthcoming from Little, Brown & Co., and a freelance writer in New York.

PJ GACH is a New York City-based freelance writer. Her media clients include *The New York Post*, *Ingenue Magazine*, *RollingStone.com*, and *UGO.com*.

JESSICA EDWARDS is a press agent for film and television projects at Murphy Public Relations in New York. She has been a production manager, assistant director, and editor, and co-produces the Canadian leg of Resfest in her native Toronto. She graduated with a BFA in filmmaking from Concordia University in Montreal, and currently lives in Brooklyn where she aims to dissolve the publicist stereotype, one journalist at a time.

RICK HARRISON is an assistant editor at *The Independent*. He has a master's degree in journalism from New York University and his work has appeared in *Newsday*, *The Forward*, *The Daily News*, *Our Town* and *The West Side Spirit*. His more mindless musings can be read at: www.rollingbones.blogspot.com.



Nick Schrager

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BRIAN LIBBY is a Portland-based freelance journalist, film critic, and photographer whose writing has appeared in *The New York Times*, *Premiere*, *Salon*, *Christian Science Monitor*, *Willamette Week* and other publications. His work can be found at www.brianlibby.com.

FIONA NG lives in Brooklyn. She's written for *The Los Angeles Times*, *Black Book*, *Bust*, *RES*, and other publications.



Amy Thomas

FERNANDA ROSSI, known as the Documentary Doctor, is a filmmaker and story consultant who helps filmmakers craft the story structure of their films in all stages of the filmmaking process. She has doctored over 100 documentaries and fiction scripts and is the author of *Trailer Mechanics: A Guide to Making your Documentary Fundraising Trailer*. For more information: www.documentarydoctor.com.

NICK SCHAGER is a freelance journalist and film critic whose writing has appeared in *The Village Voice*, *Complex magazine*, *Slant magazine*, and other print and online publications. He recently received a master's degree in journalism from Columbia University, and his work can be found at www.nickschager.com.

AMY THOMAS is now happy to call herself a contributor to *The Independent*. Her writing has also appeared in *CITY*, *Weddingbells*, *Time Out New York*, *Lucky* and several other publications, as well as on her website, www.modgirl.com.

MARC VOGL is director of the hi/lo Film Festival and executive director of The Lobster Theater Project, a nonprofit arts organization creating new work for the stage and screen in San Francisco. He also makes short films and puts on live shows with the comedy group Killing My Lobster. Have a look to see how busy he is: www.hilofilmfestival.com, and www.killingmylobster.com.



Marc Vogl

members in the news

John Long

Torrington, CT

Member since: January 2005

John Long's video documentary *Pursuit of Precision* had its broadcast premiere on Connecticut public television in January 2005. The film will stay in the station's broadcast cycle for two years.

Annetta Marion

New York, NY

Member since: 1997

Annetta Marion has been accepted into the American Film Institute's Directing Workshop for Women in Los Angeles, where she will work on her short film, *Alaska*.

Vivian Kleiman

Berkeley, CA

Member since: 1995

Vivian Kleiman served as senior producer and series director on "The Meaning of Food," a 3-part documentary series produced in association with Oregon Public Broadcasting and aired nationally on PBS in April 2005. A companion book to the series was published by Globe Pequot.

Jem Cohen

Brooklyn, NY

Member since: 1988

Jem Cohen received the 2005 Independent Spirit Award as "Turning Leaf's Someone to Watch" for his film *Chain*, which opened the Images Festival in Toronto this past April.

Carol Strickland

New York, NY

Member since: 2001

Carol Strickland's romantic-comedy screenplay *Double or Nothing* won first prize in the Hollywood Scriptwriting Institute's March contest.

Dakkan Abbe

Brooklyn, NY

Member since: 2003

Dakkan Abbe served as producer, director, DP, writer, and editor for a six-part documentary travel series called "Inside the Tuscan Hills," which was distributed by PBS and has been broadcast on their local stations nationwide since winter 2005.

Danielle Beverly

New York, NY

Member since: 2003

Danielle Beverly's first feature documentary *Learning to Swallow*, edited by former board member Kyle Henry, will have its world premiere in competition at the Silverdocs AFI/Discovery Channel Documentary Film Festival this month. Beverly was also selected as an IFP/NY Project Involve Honoree this spring, and was the recipient of an SCETV Professional Development Fellowship for travel to INPUT, the international public television conference held in San Francisco.

Crista Giuliani

Brooklyn, NY

Member since: 1998

Crista Giuliani secured Omni Film Distribution as a sales agent for her short film *Valentine's Day*. Omni will be representing the film internationally, most recently at the 2005 Cannes Film Festival.

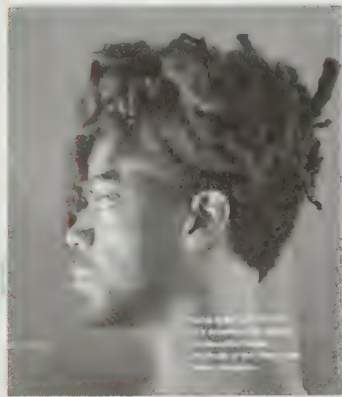
Ralph Arlyck

Poughkeepsie, New York

Member since: The Beginning (circa 1970)

Following Sean, a documentary feature by Ralph Arlyck, will be screened at the Munich and Karlovy Vary Film Festivals late this month and early July. The film received a Special Jury Prize at the Hamptons International Film Festival last fall and has been an official selection at Rotterdam, Full Frame, and the Cinéma du Réel in Paris.

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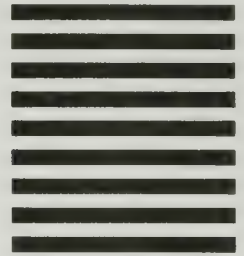
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NEWS



Joel Hyatt (CFO), actor Leonardo DiCaprio, and Al Gore (chairman) help launch Currents, the first national cable network devoted to and created by an 18 to 34-year-old audience (courtesy of Wireimage.com)

Staying Current

A future generation of television

By Amy Thomas

Most people still get a chuckle out of Al Gore's 1999 claim to having "invented" the internet. Although his words were taken out of context—indeed, he was misquoted—the reference has haunted him ever since. But perhaps his next dalliance into revolutionary technology will leave the hecklers eating crow. This August he and entrepreneur Joel Hyatt are launching Current, the first national cable network devoted to and created by an 18 to 34-year-old audience.

"Young adults have a powerful voice, but you can't hear that voice on television...yet," said Gore, who will serve as the nascent network's chairman. "We intend to change that with Current, giving those who crave the empowerment of the web the same opportunity for expression on television."

Although Gore brings a big name and, therefore, more recognition and credibility to the endeavor, it's the network itself that's most intriguing. Current will offer around-the-clock programming that

caters to younger generations' appetite for bite-sized content. Like a cross between a TV blog and an iPod on shuffle, it will have short-format programming that covers everything from technology and the environment to fashion and music in 15-second to five-minute "pod" segments. Slated pods include, among others, Current Gigs which will offer career guidance and insight; Current Parent aimed at first-time moms and dads; and Current Soul which tracks trends in spirituality.

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More than the clever easy-to-digest programming, Current will be revolutionary in that it's interactive, with the audience contributing to and shaping the content. "Until now, the notion of viewer participation has been limited to sending a tape to 'America's Funniest Home Videos,' calling an interview show, taking part in an instant poll, or voting someone off an island," Gore said. "We're creating a powerful new brand of television that doesn't treat audiences as merely viewers, but as collaborators."

Viewers will be able to upload their own segments through the Current Studio on the network's website, www.current.tv. They are specifically hoping to draw submissions for pods such as the creative Current Video which is meant to discover the next Spike Jonze and the more indulgent, free-form Current Rant, which invites viewers to go off on a particular topic. To facilitate viewer participation, Current will offer a comprehensive online training program that's developed by bright, young creatives who are experts in storytelling, shooting, and editing. With their online training program, the network hopes to cultivate a coterie of acclaimed Current Journalists (CJs) and, conceivably, a whole new generation of TV personalities.

To jumpstart content and encourage contributors, the network held a contest from April 11 to May 12, soliciting video submissions in three categories: Current Gigs, Current Fashion, and Current Soul. After the network chose five semi-finalists, registered users of the web site were able to vote on the winner, who received a development deal to produce three short segments after Current launches.

Beyond its progressive programming and training, Current is demonstrating how internet-savvy it is with smart associations. The network is partnering with uber search site Google to get its twice-an-hour news updates. Titled Google Current, these pods will feature the latest Google search data as news updates. In other words, instead of big corporations deciding what's news and feeding it to the audience, they're opting for a more democratic approach informed by what the world at large has on their minds.

Google is quite excited by Current's vision. Larry Page, Google's co-founder and president of products said, "Current is an exciting new direction for TV programming that enables any viewer to have the opportunity to broadcast their video to the world."

Current laid its foundation last May when Gore, Hyatt, and company founders acquired Newsworld International, a 24-hour global news channel produced by The Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, for \$70 million. With that purchase, Current got NWI's reach into nearly 20 million households, and with private financing it will continue building on that base.

Naturally, the Current team will be young and multicultural, delivering their hip take on the news, current events, and pop culture in a club-like atmosphere. While Current could face a challenge drawing its audience from other tried-and-true networks like Viacom-owned MTV and VH-1, their short-form programming and viewer contributions could also be a big hit. Since shows such as Comedy Central's "The Daily Show" are favorites among this age group, Current's personality and structure should strike a chord with the audience. And, following reality TV, Hollywood movies, and prime time sitcoms, Current plans to work with advertisers to create alternative branding and advertising methods in lieu of 30-second television commercials which, for better or worse, are what this TiVo generation is used to.

Lake Placid on Hold

The federal government isn't the only sector that's running into budgeting boondoggles as of late. The Adirondack Film Society announced that the Lake Placid Film Festival will take a one year hiatus in order to run a more financially sound enterprise. "There's only two ways to do things: the right way and the wrong way, and we wanted to do it the right way," said board chairman Nelson Page of their decision to scuttle the annual event.

In the five years since it launched, the Lake Placid Film Festival—originally known as the Lake Placid Film Forum—



Patricia Clarkson with directors Alan Rudolph and Larry Clark at the 2003 Lake Placid Film Festival (Ben Stechshulte)

has earned a reputation among filmmakers and film lovers as a uniquely intimate event. Each June, it has brought professionals and fans alike to the picturesque New York town in the Adirondack Mountains. In addition to screening dozens of films, shorts, and documentaries, it has held forums, panels, classes and readings of screenplays. Respected industry members like actor Campbell Scott, documentary filmmaker Albert Maysles, and director Mira Nair have taught some of the classes in the past. Other festival guests have included Milos Forman, Debra Winger, Patricia Clarkson, Larry Clark, Jennifer Jason-Leigh, William Kennedy, and Elmore Leonard. And the LPFF has honored distinguished filmmakers with lifetime achievement awards, including Martin Scorsese last year. But it all comes with a price, and there just wasn't enough money in the coffers to pay this year.

"We were operating behind the budgeting 8-ball," Page said, citing the festival's date as one obstacle. The organizers were finding that once the five-day festival wrapped in June, it was difficult to turn around in the slow summer months and start securing financing for the following year. Then there's the issue of a growing number of film festivals cropping up in New York and all over the country. While they provide great opportunities for filmmakers and exciting events for the viewers, they also eat away at established festivals' sources of interest

and income. "There's only so many sponsors and state money," Page said. While the LPFF could conceivably be more aggressive about securing sponsorships—Kodak, Amtrak, and GM have been sponsors in the past—they will more likely change the event's date in 2006.

But certain other things will remain the same. The organizers are adamant about keeping the quality and reputation of the event and have no plans to change the programming, reduce the number of days and movies, or to cut staff. "Better to take a year off and go forward with more security," is how Page describes their plan to be smart and proactive instead of being blindly optimistic and losing money.

In the meantime, The Adirondack Film Society will host a number of special screenings and programs in Lake Placid throughout the year. Artistic Director Kathleen Carroll, who founded the festival with Naj Wikoff and novelist Russell Banks said, "We are extremely grateful to all of you and we hope for your continued support of our plans to present a reinvigorated film festival in the near future."

Going Once, Going Twice...Not Going at All

Digital moviemaking could very well be the next frontier for Hollywood, but it's not necessarily worth \$1.5 million. At least that's one conclusion documentary



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filmmaker Mark Estabrook might draw. On April 6, he offered the domain name digitalmovie.com on eBay with a starting bid price of \$1.5 million and a "Buy Now" option of \$3 million. By the time the auction closed on April 15, there had been no bidders.

"We are definitely in the digital movie age, and I felt like the name had reached a point where the entertainment industry would know what to do with it," Estabrook said in a press release. In 1998 Estabrook acquired the name by trading it for a digital movie camera. He believes that in the seven years since then, advancements in encryption technology that make the downloading of movies possible at much faster rates also make the URL a must-have for "entertainment giants" like Sony, Warner and others. Estabrook also cited advances in technology and storage capacities and the increasing usage of pay-on-demand and DVD kiosks as indications of a growing demand for and interest in digital moviemaking.

His eBay pitch: "Enough said. The name speaks for itself. The starting bid is \$1,500,000.00... less than a small house in Southern California!" Up for stakes in the auction was the registration rights of digitalmovie.com—and as a "bonus" Estabrook added the .net, .org, and .us extensions as well. Banking on a strong movement toward the digital moviemaking arena that would make his URL irresistible to head Hollywood honchos, Estabrook emphasized his belief in its

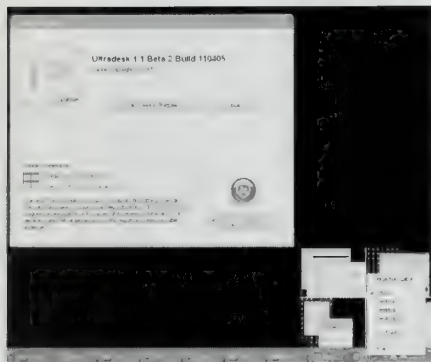
value. Or, as he simply stated, "The future of entertainment is digital."

Estabrook did not develop digitalmovie.com into a downloading site himself because of the need for high amounts of broadband. "I really hate to let it go, as I studied filmmaking in college, but the money I estimate this name is worth would make an awesome digital movie." Estabrook believes the entertainment industry is the only group capable of developing the capital and infrastructure to support digitalmovie.com. In fact, after the eBay auction ended, Estabrook posted the domain name on sedo.com, a site that specifically sells URLs, with the following directions: "Please do not place an offer on this name unless you have movie industry level funding. Seller will not respond to offers less than \$1,000,000 U.S."

Estabrook, who is currently working on a documentary about the late astronaut Gus Grissom, couldn't be reached for comment after the eBay auction closing. But one could assume the Tennessee-based filmmaker remains hopeful. Estabrook's eBay description said: "Should this auction end without a buyer, be advised any future offers of this domain name by seller will include a royalty clause per transaction. That's right, the price is going up, not down. This is your company's last chance to obtain DIGITALMOVIE.COM at reduced cost! Think of it, billions of downloads are just waiting..." ★

Tools You Can Use

By David Alm



Sundance's new online resource for festival updates and news (Sundance Film Institute)

Sundance.com

Expanding its reach to become as much a virtual destination for indie filmmakers as a physical one, the Sundance Film Institute launched an online resource early this year, providing up-to-the-minute information on the festival's member film companies, the films it has screened, and general news. The site provides details on companies and their contacts, film entries with brief synopses and stats on their creative teams, and a news section that covers everything else. www.sundance.org/source.

Could PCs Become the New Macs?

It's no surprise that DV professionals prefer Macs to PCs—they're more visually sophisticated and friendlier to programs like Photoshop and Final Cut Pro. But one pro-Windows software company wants to change that. This spring Kaolay, a new software development firm in Alba, Italy, introduced Ultradesk v. 1.1, a virtual desktop manager that allows Windows users to maintain multiple desktops at once. Currently available in Beta for free, single licenses of the software will soon hit the market for just

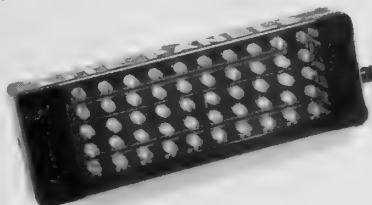
\$19.95. And whether or not Ultradesk can actually lure hardcore Mac-booster into the cult of Gates remains to be seen, but the software does provide tempting bait. www.kaolay.com.

After Dark

Add a little noir to your next cinema verité project with the new infrared LED lighting system from LitePanels, Inc., a Hollywood-based hardware company. Measuring just 6.75"x2.25" x 1.25"

and weighing 9.6 ounces, these little panels allow for shooting in total darkness and in extreme low-light situations. They can be mounted on cameras, stands, or any tight spot in which you might wish to shoot. Moreover, they can be powered by a variety of 10–30-volt sources, including an AC adapter, camera battery, or battery pack. At \$700 per, the new panels might not attract the next Jean Rouch just yet, but it's good to see that the late French anthropologist-cum-documentarian and pioneer of cinema verité's legacy lives on.

www.litepanels.com.

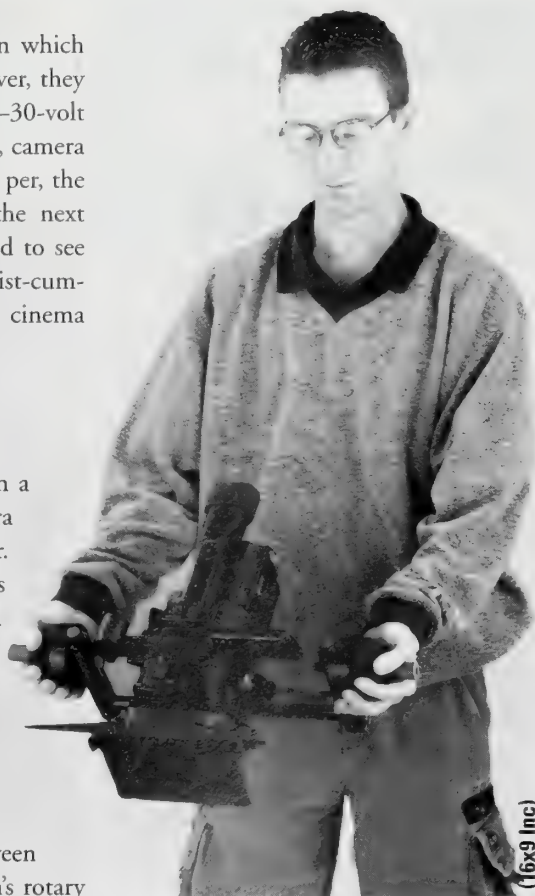


(LitePanels, Inc.)

Handheld Grace

Not everyone who shoots with a lightweight, handheld DV camera wants to emulate Lars Von Trier. Those who desire smooth takes might consider the new Chrosziel Twister DV, from Burbank-based filmmaking outfitters 16x9 Inc. This lightweight stabilizing apparatus consists of two handles that attach to your camera's central mounting plate, allowing the camera to pivot between the two handgrips on the system's rotary

axle. Operating on the principle that humans naturally move in a steady, level manner when carrying objects, the creators of the Chrosziel Twister DV designed the device to distribute a camera's weight between a user's two hands, allowing for both spontaneity and grace under virtually any condition. In this case, however, grace has a price: Each device costs \$1,695. www.16x9inc.com★



(16x9 Inc)



One of Edwards's recent projects is *Saint Ralph* which opens on June 10th (courtesy of Jessica Edwards)

Behind the Spin

What do film publicists actually do?
An expert exposes the truth

By Jessica Edwards, publicist at Murphy PR

There is a mystique to filmmaking—the silvery light that reflects off the screen, the way the story shapes a character's whole life in two hours and how that life can then resonate so deeply with an audience. The myth of filmmaking is what makes it such a powerful medium. But more and more, art and independent film have dovetailed with the contemporary commercial demands of the medium.

Except for ad buys, it is woefully difficult to guarantee that an independent film will receive any attention in the press, not to mention from the general public, because independent films have

few of the resources—or overtly commercial instincts—that studios use to track and shape their product. The result on the festival circuit, where most of these films are seen for the first time, is often perceived as a complex web of press agents serving as promotion consultants to neophyte filmmakers and producers, which may explain why the world of publicity is so shrouded in stereotype. Or maybe it is due to a serious misunderstanding over what a publicist, like myself, does and why.

Even with all its recent expansion, the Austin-based SXSW Film Festival still represents an authentic taste of the independent film world. There is a large com-

munity presence and a real support from local Austinites, bolstered by a small industry attendance that doesn't create a suffocating environment to new filmmakers trying to get some feedback on their projects. There is great opportunity at this festival to access all types of information to further their understanding of the art and market of the medium. I had hoped when I attended SXSW earlier this year that one of its panel offerings, "Meet the Film Press," would provide filmmakers with some real information about how to get your film noticed by journalists. And for my part, it only makes sense for a publicist to attend a panel of film reporters discussing what they do to help

better understand what drives the people we need to access.

In the Austin Convention Center where the festival was headquartered, the panels were held in divided rooms with your typical rows of chairs and a long dais at the front. The room for this particular panel was significantly full and when polled, the audience was about three quarters filmmakers. The six media panelists (which included Rebecca Carroll, the editor of this magazine) represented a fair cross section of mainstream, independent, and industry media, and the conversation very quickly turned its focus to press materials and the demerits of glossy packages versus phone calls and email pitches. It became apparent to me that the panel wasn't going to be an opportunity for filmmakers to hear about how important it is to know the outlet they are approaching, what the difference is between a review and a feature, and what realistically they can expect in terms of any kind of coverage at all.

What could have been an informative dialogue about how to navigate the broad and mysterious world of film marketing and promotion turned into somewhat of

a bash session—only one journalist on the entire panel suggested that a publicist might actually be helpful for a filmmaker looking to get their film noticed. Panelists seemed to largely agree that it is unnecessary to have a publicist at all if you are a first-time filmmaker, because you can do all the outreach yourself. Which to be fair is not impossible, but does require a certain amount of research in order to learn who and how to pitch, what elements of film an outlet covers, and the skills and virtues of persistent follow-up. Had this been suggested during the panel, I would have felt better about the whole thing, but sadly, what came across more than anything else was that journalists don't like to be called by publicists at 7:30 a.m. How does this help a filmmaker better understand the film media world? A 7:30 a.m. call may be annoying and unprofessional, but that really boils down to a topic more suited for discussion around a water cooler. Why not discuss what to look for in a press agent—why some are bad and others have succeeded? In retrospect, it may have been beneficial to raise my hand and pose this question to the panel, but it



Edwards was working on *Stagedoor* when it had its world premiere at SXSW (courtesy of Jessica Edwards)

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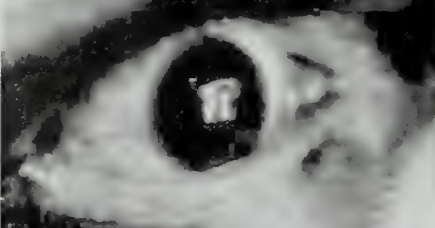
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wasn't the time or place to air grievances or attempt to re-educate. Although, I have often thought that the myth of publicity would make a good panel all on its own.

Film pros on panels like this one rarely realize that their audience is mostly made up of rookies—people seeking the most basic information, not film game insider gripes. For better or worse, at some point these filmmakers will need a professional to guide them through the treacherous waters of the festival world, and they could have come away from this SXSW panel armed with some knowledge in determining who that professional—agency or rep—might be. Instead, I fear that most came away with the notion that press agents are unnecessary, which only furthers the stereotype and continues the trend that there is no separation within agent vocation. In other words, all press agents are just annoying, overzealous spin-doctors—not an integral part of the indie film landscape.

Ultimately, I left the panel feeling that there needs to be a reevaluation of the role of publicist, because right now it is still a misconstrued function in the film business clouded with Lizzie Grubman-esque stereotypes that are perpetuated by highly coiffed door girls in Manolo Blahnik's. For someone like myself, with a real passion for the medium, fighting this stereotype is often an uphill battle. Maybe if there were to be an explanation of what it means to be a press agent and how that role is integrated into the larger machine of film marketing the stereotype could be altered.

First, distinguishing the difference between independent project-based publicity and the personal publicist is crucial. When big movie stars get hounded about their personal lives, one can argue the necessity and virtues of hiring a representative to fend off the press. But in the world of independent film, this isn't really the case. So few independent films get any consideration at all—niche nor

mainstream—never mind the actors in the film, that by default an independent publicist becomes the film's advocate and a conduit to the media. Essentially, it's the role of an informer: "Here is this film. You may like it because of these reasons. Maybe your readers/viewers/listeners would be interested in it because of these other reasons. Would you consider checking it out?" And then it's up to the journalist to make a connection to the film.

An independent publicist can be especially helpful at a film festival, where there are upwards of 200 films for the attending media to consider. And a good publicist is someone who connects with a project, seeks out the film's strong identifiers, and hones that message so that the film's back-story is an understated part of the film viewing experience. And yes, the day-to-day calling and emailing and pitching and inviting and confirming may be annoying to a journalist who is hearing from several different people about several different films on any given day, but there is also a remedy to this. If a journalist is not interested in the project being pitched, they can always say no. Any publicist with an ounce of self-respect will back off and try a different section of the publication or a different writer who may better connect with the project. There is a certain art to pitching, and knowing the outlet and subtle tastes of individual writers and critics is a good portion of the job. This requires research and dedication.

The current festival landscape is a hard one to navigate and can very easily be overwhelming for a first-time filmmaker. A publicist can help by steering the film towards the media and acting as its escort and champion. Amid all the conflicting ideas and perceptions about publicists, it is still important to remember that they are your first line of offense to the media and are a crucial resource in gaining the largest possible audience for your film. ★

ASK

THE DOCUMENTARY DOCTOR

By Fernanda Rossi

Dear Doc Doctor:

When I was still starting out as a filmmaker, I made lots of mistakes but my work was innovative. Now that I have more experience, I find myself self-censoring my work to the point where I'm paralyzed. How do I go back to being an innovative beginner?

Self-censorship grows slowly over time, and while beginners struggle to learn how to navigate the film business, more experienced filmmakers who are all too aware of what works aren't inclined to take as many risks. The irony of this situation is that most if not all documentaries have unrated theatrical releases, yet filmmakers develop their own internal committee of censors anyway.

And how much are networks and cable to blame for a filmmaker's acquired self-restriction? Vanessa Arteaga, senior programming and production executive of Wellspring Media, a leading New York-based independent distribution company, says: "Networks and cable, both domestic and international, have varying degrees of regulations regarding language, nudity, violence, subject matter, etc.—enough to make any filmmaker's head spin. That said, filmmakers would severely compromise their films if they design them to fit a cookie-cutter, made-for-TV construct simply out of the idea that it may be the only way for their films to be seen by the world. Filmmakers should strive to create a film that is of theatrical caliber. The broadcast-



ers will deal with the modifications that need to be made to the film to fit their standards if there is a strong desire for the title."

But if you feel strongly that only one venue is possible for your film, by all means, make sure your documentary is not in direct opposition to that venue's regulations. Arteaga adds: "Assume nothing. What a filmmaker might think is too controversial or won't be accepted by anybody, may be the very reason why there would be interest in pursuing the film to begin with."

So if outside limits are somewhat negotiable, why are you and other filmmakers still wary of crossing the line? Interestingly enough, positive experiences play a role here. As you accumulate awards and standing ovations, you develop a positive association to your film, the response it received,

and how that response made you feel. And who wouldn't want that again and again? Self-censorship is caused as much by internalized convention and restrictions as it is by compulsion to repeat pleasant fulfilling experiences.

Spend time dispelling those imaginary outside demons and internalized no-no's, but spend more time neutralizing praise and recognition. Accomplishments are great for your self-esteem and to help you raise funds for future films, but they are deadly when you want to try new things. Remember that audiences responded to your previous work, and new audiences will respond to your future work. And in the remote event that absolutely nobody watches or likes your new risqué documentary, your previous films with its many awards won't evaporate. Your talent remains regardless of how your work is perceived. Make another film.

Dear Doc Doctor:

I have an experimental film background, but I'm now making a social issue documentary. Will my film lose credibility if I use experimental techniques to convey a very serious topic?

Format and content—format or content. Painters, musicians, and writers are free to play with form. Their days of dutifully representing reality are far behind. Documentary filmmakers are in the midst of this dilemma and more so now that documentaries are going mainstream.

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Your current dilemma can find origins with the first film ever made—a short piece by Lumière featuring a train pulling into the station that had everybody in the audience running for their lives. They believed that what they saw was real and that it was happening at that very moment.

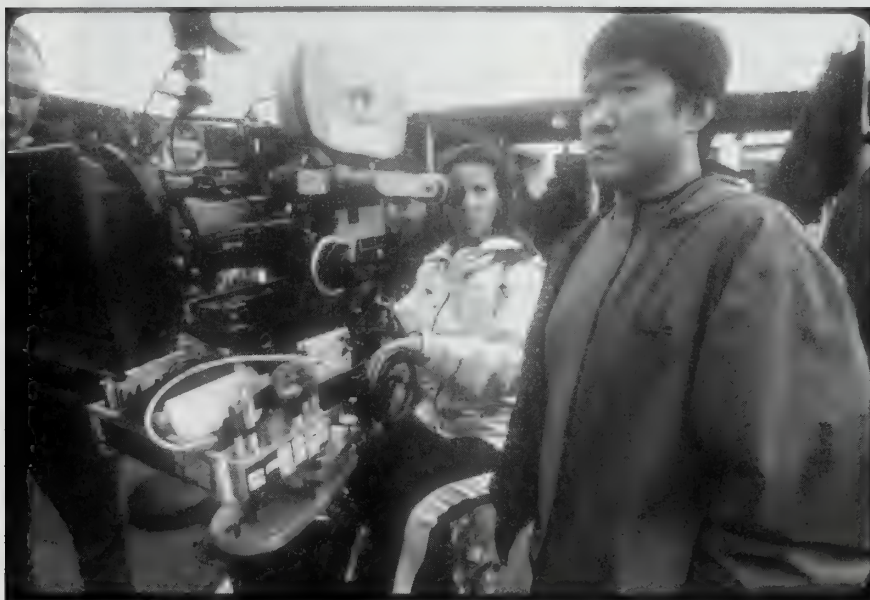
Later on, we became aware that what we saw wasn't actually happening right then and there, yet we remained convinced that we could capture reality with a film camera. Everything was a true representation. Or was it a truthful representation? And since then, audiences have survived and adapted to MTV's fast-cutting style and the oxymoron of reality-TV. If filmmaking managed to harbor any secrets of how reality was manipulated or re-created on the screen, an overdose of "behind the scenes" shows and the extras on DVDs has taken care of that.

Be mindful that the audience you are talking about is much more informed today about style and medium than at any other time in history. Your concerns are not unfounded, though. You wouldn't like to startle a fully hypnotized audience with a technique that takes them out of their trance. But rather than worrying about style, concern yourself with consistency of style.

If you present your experimental style or technique in context, any audience will almost certainly follow your reasoning. Once you establish a convention, whatever that convention is, you just need to remain faithful to it throughout the film. Filmmaker and media artist Liz Canner can attest to this. "For the most part, we are used to having our information packaged in a specific way," she says. "Therefore I have found that presenting a topic using experimental methods can often help audiences to see an issue in a new way."

There is a new breed of viewers that can read between the lines, or in this case, between the frames. Why not give them a challenge?

Want to ask the Doc Doctor a question for a future issue of The Independent? Write to her at info@documentarydoctor.com.



Lisa Leone (director of photography) and Michael Kang (director)
(Tom Legoff)

NoVacancy

Michael Kang's *The Motel* only has room for good writing

By PJ Gach and Rick Harrison

The first rule of fiction writing is to write what you know. The second rule of fiction writing is to *write what you know*. Sort of like *Fight Club*. Although, instead of advice from a manipulative, mindless movie that thinks it's a lot smarter than it is, writing what you know means something—it's more than bare knuckles to the chin. And Michael Kang—whose award-winning film *The Motel* shares a Chinese American adolescent's story without the benefit of some wacky kung fu choreography or the august blessing of a bankable name like Ang Lee—knows that writing what you know in the face of all market wisdom proves the oxymoronic nature of the phrase “market wisdom.” What you know is the only thing you have worth

sharing as a filmmaker.

“As an artist, I really wanted to tell this story,” Kang says. “Playing the market is impossible. If you try to set out to do something marketable, you will fail. The only sure bet is to do something you believe in.”

Shot in the summer of 2003 on location in Poughkeepsie, New York, and premiering at Sundance this past January, *The Motel* tells the quiet story of 13-year-old Ernest Chin (Jeffrey Chyau), and 20-something Sam Kim (Sung Kang; *Better Luck Tomorrow*, 2002), a lonely player type with a troubled recent past who drives a fancy car, drinks scotch from the bottle, and has different women in his room every night. The two become tentative friends as Sam tries to guide Ernest

through the oily waters of adolescence.

Though cast almost exclusively with Asian actors, it would be hard to find someone who couldn't relate to the film's themes of intergenerational disconnect between children and parents and the clueless, flailing gestures of burgeoning sexuality.

“It's universal,” says Kang, a Korean American born and raised in Rhode Island. “There isn't anyone who hasn't gone through puberty and had a horrible time with it.”

And although Kang is confident that his film will find a distributor—having already garnered a slew of honors for it, including a script that won the 24th annual Asian American International Film Festival Screenplay Competition



Jade Wu (Ahma), Alexis Chang (Katie), Stephen Chen (Gung Gung), and Jeffrey Chyau (Ernest Chin) in *The Motel* (Tom Legoff)

and the 2003 Sundance/NHK International Filmmakers Award—polishing what he knew into what could play dramatically took some extra effort.

“I knew the premise, I knew the issues, but I wasn’t really sure what the resolution to it was,” Kang says of his script troubles. A friend recommended that he try the Sundance Screenwriter’s Lab for help. “I had no idea what the labs were,” he says. “Actually, I’m glad that I didn’t know what they were, because if I did, I probably would not have gotten in. I would have been too calculating. I would have fucked it up.”

But the education of 35-year-old Michael Kang developed as naturally as his script: with persistence and a little help from his friends.

In a diner in New York City’s Union Square on a cold February day, Kang discusses his young filmmaking career, beginning with his first project, 1998’s *A Waiter Tomorrow*. A short film about revengeful waiters based on a theater piece created by a performance troupe Kang was involved with, it was more than just an opportunity to extend the life of a skit; it was his chance to finally direct a film and gain essential experience.

“I basically learned everything I need-

ed to know on a technical level about making a film in three days, and I made it as difficult as possible,” Kang says. “I had a whole ballistics team, special effects, make-up, and fight choreographer. After that experience, I realized I knew everything that I could have learned in four years of film school, and then I just jumped in and started doing stuff.” *A Waiter Tomorrow*, along with his next short, *Japanese Cowboy* (2000) both won awards.

Not bad for a filmmaker who originally wanted to be a playwright. “I always loved film,” Kang says. “I think that Hollywood gives film a bad name, so I was embarrassed that I liked it so much. It was more respectable to be a playwright—more respectable to be a ‘real’ writer than a screenwriter. It took me awhile to admit that I really wanted to make films, and that it doesn’t have to be what the studios are pumping out.”

Kang, whose father teaches physics at Brown and whose mother taught nursing at the University of Rhode Island, went to New York University to study dramatic writing, hoping to find the New York he saw in the films of the 70s. “When I came here, I was like, what happened? I feel like it still exists in the outer bor-

oughs, like Queens and the Bronx—that gritty, real New York.”

Soon after moving, Kang wrote and directed *Bike Messengers* and *The Cycle Messenger World Championship* (2000), a series of short documentaries, and he became a founder of Roshomon, a New York City based screenwriting group. He also got involved with the Asian American Screenwriter’s Circle and a theater troupe called Peeling the Banana.

“It was the normal kind of experimental theater,” Kang says of the group’s work, “where you pull your pants down on stage.”

When asked how he balanced his many projects and obligations, Kang laughs and says, “I have a hard time saying no. I feel like if I like what I’m doing, I don’t pay attention, it finds its way into my life. It comes in waves; different things come in at different times.”

One of those waves brought him Ed Lin, a writer friend of Kang and a fellow member of the troupe, who showed Kang his short story which later became Lin’s novel, *Waylaid* (Kaya Press, 2002) and then *The Motel*. Kang loved the bitter-sweet coming-of-age tale about a fatherless young Chinese American boy growing up with a miserable, demanding shrew of a mother in a rundown motel, and used it as the basis for a feature film screenplay. “[The film] is like our two takes on the same premise,” Kang says. “To me, it was important that Lin got credit up there to show that we’re all working together.”

Meanwhile, making shorts began to pale. “It got to the point where I knew exactly how many pizzas I had to order for a production,” Kang says. “I lost the joy of storytelling. It was all very pragmatic...and then I had this script [*The Motel*]. But I didn’t understand how this script could become something that gets on screen and someone gives you a sack of money to make.”

The Motel sat on a shelf for almost nine months. Eventually, he entered it in the Asian American International Film Festival Screenplay Competition and won. Kang, whose college roommate was ushered into Hollywood by director and producer Ivan Reitman, started talking to

people about the project, and that's when the idea of applying to the Sundance Labs surfaced. "It was funny because a year and a half before that, I had a couple of friends who had mentors, and I didn't know where to find one. I feel like that active wish on my part [to have a mentor], made me open to knowing that I had a lot more to learn, and I realized that if you ask for help, people do want to help you. So, I just opened myself up and I think that's what happened."

The screenwriter's lab led to the filmmaker's lab and then back to another screenwriter's lab—all through Sundance. And with each, Kang and *The Motel* gained indispensable experience and resources. The Sundance labs, taught by volunteer veterans of both big studio and independent productions, offer filmmakers not just greater insight into the creative process, but often the opportunity to grab the guiding hand of a mentor.

It was during the filmmaker's lab where Kang met producers Matthew Greenfield and Gina Kwon and director Miguel Arteta (*Chuck & Buck*, *The Good*

Girl). Greenfield and Kwon liked Kang's script and agreed to become producers for *The Motel*. Arteta and Kang, close in age, hit it off right away, and Arteta became Kang's long-sought-for mentor.

The project really started to gain momentum once Greenfield and Arteta were on board, although financing remained elusive. "There were a bunch of people from the labs who made their films this year, and other New York filmmakers too, and I realized that no two films have ever gotten their money the same way," Kang says. "It was a lot of knocking on doors and a lot of luck." In time, Kang was introduced to Richard and Esther Shapiro (creators of television's "Dynasty"), both active supporters of young artists, who became the executive producers on the film and made a significant investment. A small equity group created by Kang's friends also contributed to the production.

Though as of this writing the future of *The Motel* remains uncertain, Kang continues to get by with a little help from his friends. And for them as well.

His friend Mira Nair (*Vanity Fair*, *Monsoon Wedding*) gave a script of his to director Wayne Wang (*The Joy Luck Club*, *Smoke*), who asked him to shoot second unit setups for the recent studio release *Because of Winn-Dixie*. Currently, he is co-writing a script with Edmund Lee called *Koreatown*, which he hopes will pay homage to films like *Serpico* (1973), and *Dog Day Afternoon* (1975). Kang is also at work on a dark comedic play for the New York-based Ma-Yi Theatre Company.

When asked how he selects the material he chooses to write about, Kang says, "Anything I've done creatively, it's always been about filling a void. I've never seen this movie, I've never seen this short, I've never seen this performance before. It's trying to figure out what I want to see. So, I don't think I'm limited to just the independent route. It could be a huge Hollywood blockbuster that I've never seen before. I just feel like I'm driven by that feeling of 'I'd like to see that movie.'"

It's a pure and infectious drive that makes others want to see that movie too, whatever it is. ★

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Good Lord, Not Another Artsy Film Festival!

Reflections from the hi/lo Film Festival founder



The hi/lo Film Festival was held in April 2005 in San Francisco (courtesy of Marc Vogl)

By Marc Vogl

I am Marc Vogl, a 30-something East Coast kid who came out to San Francisco in the 90s following a Richard Dreyfuss-in-*Close Encounters* kind of urge. I didn't know what was luring me west or what I'd find when I got here, but I was powerless to resist. And, like the lemmings in *Close Encounters*, I was not alone. A critical mass of musicians, actors, comedians, and filmmakers moved here on the eve of the dot-com rollercoaster and felt like making our own entertainment. To that end we seized the means of production.

We rented theaters.

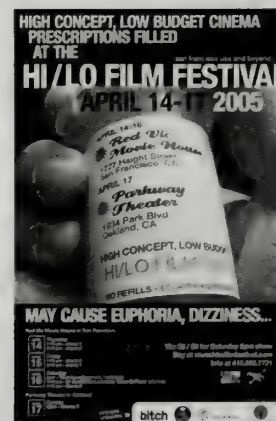
We bought funny wigs.

We borrowed cameras

We dated directors of photography (or tried to).

In a surprisingly short order a body of work was created, a school of like-minded artists was unwittingly formed, and a very silly first movie was in the can.

The film was about a piece of chocolate that flies through space. It was enigmatically titled *Space Chocolate*. The film was a commentary on an entire canon of anti-climactic space odysseys, a triumph of low-budget puppetry, and it starred a modified Toblerone traversing a galaxy of duvateen and Christmas lights to land in an old pizza box. Like a sandcastle made



The 2005 hi/lo poster (Keith Teleki)

just before the tide rolls in, it seemed quite likely that no one would ever see this five-minute saga. And, in the grand tradition of people determined to do everything the hard way, the film's directors, Brian L. Perkins and Paul Charney, and I founded the hi/lo Film Festival pretty much for the sole purpose of showing *Space Chocolate*.

Interest in the film festival picked up a lot faster than interest in our sweet-toothed inter-stellar adventure flick, and since that first festival in 1997, thousands of films have been submitted to us (over 500 this year). We've presented over 300 shorts, features, docs, videos, animations, experimentals, and indescribable concoctions at screenings around the country and before eager crowds in the Bay Area. Local publications like *The San Francisco Bay Guardian* now describe the festival as "four days of free-thinking creative combustion," and *Film Threat* recently paid us the nicest complement I think we'll ever get: "The hi/lo Film Festival has a

program that stretches across all emotions...there is an eclectic selection here that personifies what being different is. And it's worth it." (Oh yeah, *Space Chocolate* ultimately played at a couple other places too, including an astronomy class at the University of Oklahoma.)

Bringing together films based on something as slippery as a "high concept" idea executed on a small budget, has been an education in the human imagination. I wish I could say that after watching nearly a decade's worth of low-budget film submissions I'd seen it all, but I certainly haven't. Yes, we've programmed documentaries about competitive table setting, noise musicians who do it all for Christ, and a guy who makes art out of dead rats and his mother's dentures. But my conception of how many ways there are to live on this planet extends far beyond the annual crop of docs about individual nutballs and eccentric communities. My sense of the human experience is expanded by filmmakers who

attach a camera lens to a microscope to make details on a corroded spoon look like a lunar surface; who convey dementia by rearranging a narrative about Alzheimer's to reflect how a sufferer might tell the story; who painstakingly animate the imagined telephone conversations of rabbits and fish one film cell at a time; who place a tortilla and an apple in a room and let the cameras roll; who send digital hot dogs flying through the air while cranking up Foreigner; and who sit at home alone in their boxers dispensing dubious financial advice to their digital camera.

When navigating through tapes and disks of stories alternately surreal, mundane, dazzling, and totally unredeeming (yes, we get a lot of stinkers) the challenge is to pick out the work that starts with an original idea and ends up a faithfully executed expression of that initial inspiration. Sometimes a filmmaker sets out to tell a simple joke, to capture a single moment, to explain a particular

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Piece by Piece (Nic Hill)



Making Love (Out of Nothing At All) (Michelle Dean)

tragedy, or to chronicle an entire life, but each hi/lo film places ideas and creativity over imitation and slickness and proves, as the hi/lo motto department is fond of saying, that when it comes to movie-making big imaginations are more important than fat wallets.

While anybody with a \$500 video camera can call themselves a filmmaker, film is a wretchedly unforgiving medium, and making a film that succeeds on its own terms is very difficult. And, for better or worse, film is also the artistic medium the average Joe feels most qualified to critique. Most people may not be able to analyze a poem's sensibility or expound upon a sculpture's form, but everyone can tell you what they thought about the last movie they saw.

Looking around at the stunning number of film festivals in America it's easy to conclude that all a festival organizer has to do is open up the doors and brace for the stampede of cinemaniacs. Indeed, all year long in the Bay Area fans are lining to see nearly 50 festivals that cater to 101 flavors of film: gay films, black films, Jewish films, Arab films, Latino films, Asian American films, silent films, films made with cell phones... the list seems endless. Even as I write this in my Mission District coffee shop someone has just handed me a promo flyer for his "slo-mo" video fest!

However, it's not too hard to see that the entire community of film festivals (Sundance included) is a niche market and that our collective audience is actually not as big as we might think. I'd wager that more people saw *Garfield—The Movie* (2004 box office gross \$75 million) than all the films at all the festivals in America last year.

It's not that we're after world domination, but since film festival programmers are pretty peripheral taste-makers it's crucial that the films we program—and the way we present them—inspire our audience to want to take another chance on someone else's festival next week. More than that we want to contribute to a culture of supporting grassroots and small-scale arts programming of every type.

At hi/lo we wrestle with the subject of growth all the time. "Bigger is not better" is the guiding principle of our "high con-

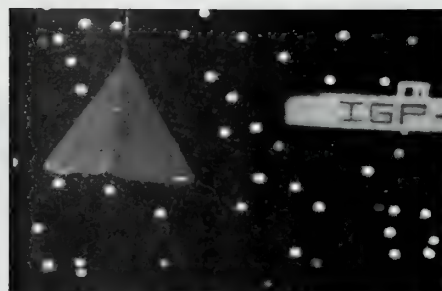
cept/low-budget" approach to picking films. We strive to put films before audiences that illustrate how liberating a small budget can be and, by implication, how enormous budgets have a way of fucking up a lot of really good ideas for movies. This belief that film festivals, like a painting or a novel, should have an appropriate size is also the conceit that made *Space Chocolate* at once a *Star Wars* parody and something really original, too. It's also at the root of why talented filmmakers don't all go to Hollywood or Vancouver or wherever they made *Garfield*.

Sure, we want more people to see the films we program, and yes we want to be able to show more films. But unless Loews or AMC gives us the keys to every multiplex in the country our reach into the American mainstream will never be complete. Sometimes showing a few films at a few theaters for a few days feels as satisfying as bringing sand to the beach. But when we do get a packed house to see a killer documentary about San Francisco's graffiti history (and the men's bathroom at the movie theater is

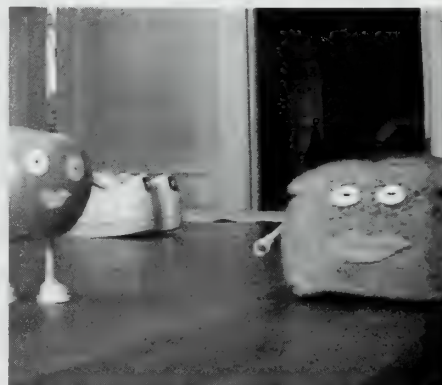
redolent with fresh tags at the end of the night), it feels like we've moved the chains forward just a little bit.

If everyone who makes great high-concept/low-budget films has a surplus of avenues to present their work, then conduits like our film festival wouldn't be necessary. We could pack up. We would be done. But the world isn't quite there yet. For all the growth and variety that has defined our festival over the past eight years, the *raison d'être* of the hi/lo Film Festival remains steadfast and true: somewhere out there someone is making a really brilliant (some would doubtless say stupid) film, and the world will be a better place if people get a chance to see it.

The hi/lo Film Festival next screens June 10 at Automotive High School in Brooklyn as part of the Rooftop Film Series. For more information about the films shown in the festival, or to submit yours to the next one, please visit: www.hilofilmfestival.com. And if you really want to see a piece of chocolate fly through the universe, check out www.killingmylobster.com.



Space Chocolate
(Paul Charney, Brian L. Perkins)



I'm With Stupid (Ben McCormick)



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Paula Jai Parker as Lexus (in shadow) and Terrence Howard as DJay in *Hustle & Flow* (Alan Spearman/Crunk Picture)

By Rebecca Carroll

There was one good thing about Malcolm Lee's 1999 studio film *The Best Man*: Terrence Howard. I wrote a review of the film for *Africana.com* (now *Blackvoices.com*) in which I said just that. I got lots of emails from angry black men because I likened the film to an R&B video (and I'd say it again today). But Terrence Howard was something else. You just sort of waited for him to enter the frame. Since then, Howard has done over a dozen films, including a handful of independents—three of which went to Sundance earlier this year: *The Salon* (Mark Brown, director), *Lacka-wana Blues* (George C. Wolfe, director), and the festival darling, *Hustle & Flow* (Craig Brewer, director), which

was bought by Paramount for a festival record \$9 million and will open theatrically next month.

Howard plays DJay, the fiercely broken yet surprisingly complex failed pimp and aspiring rap artist. It's a story that from the outset might sound familiar—the standard Horatio Alger rags to riches story, only DJay never becomes rich exactly, and his aspirations are propelled less by pure ambition as they are by emotional instinct. Howard plays DJay so deeply wanting, so internally tortured, that you nearly forget he's a pimp (if a not very good one), and think of him more as a sort of latter day Arthur Rimbaud (who actually, might have been a better pimp than poet).

I recently sat down with Terrence Howard to talk about *Hustle & Flow*, and his thoughts on filmmaking and acting.

Rebecca Carroll: So Sundance this year—three films, and one, *Hustle & Flow*, just blows up.

Terrence Howard: I had no idea that the film was going to do so well. I was just happy that Sundance had accepted it, but then the reception and response to it—halfway through the film I'm looking around and I see everyone glued to the screen, some people fidgeting in their seats, but it looked like they needed to go to the bathroom and didn't want to miss nothing. And afterwards, the applause—they had been applauding for a while for

different people, but then everyone stood up when I started walking to the stage. I didn't expect that. I don't really know what surreal means, but that's the only word I can think of to describe that experience.

RC: Doesn't it make sense, though? You poured your heart into that part and people were applauding you for it.

TH: That I love. If that's what they were applauding, that I love.

RC: Well yeah, what else would they be applauding?

TH: I just...I don't know. I was clapping too, looking around like, "Where's the star at, come on man, where he at?" And then it was like, "Oh, that's me."

RC: How did you feel while you were watching the film?

TH: I was looking for moments that weren't true.

RC: Is that what you do when you watch your performances?

TH: If you're a seamstress you're always looking for where you missed a stitch so you can remember in the future where to be more careful. I was looking at the stitching of this film, of this tapestry that we created, and it had a couple boo-boos, but that added character to it. I was happy that the boo-boos fit along with the overall idea of what I wanted, what we wanted.

RC: How did you first hear about the project?

TH: Stephanie Allain. She champi-



(L-R) Taraji Henson as Shug, Paula Jai Parker as Lexus, Terrence Howard as DJay, and Taryn Manning as Nola in *Hustle & Flow* (Alan Spearman/Crunk Picture)

oned that thing. I was staying at the Four Seasons in Beverly Hills—I don't remember what I was doing but I was there with my kids—and Stephanie set up a meeting with my agent's assistant.

RC: So you met with her?

TH: I was like, "Let's get to the skinny of it, cause I'm gonna go play with my kids." She says, "Well, I got two projects I want to talk to you about." The first was *Biker Boyz*, but she says Derek Luke is gonna star. So I say, "OK, what's the other one?" And she tells me about this script *Hustle & Flow*—this pimp selling weed who wants to become a rapper. I told her that wasn't the direction I wanted to go in, but I liked the *Biker Boyz* idea, and I told her if things changed with that to call me. She said, "Well, we can't change the lead, but there's some other people you can play." And the next

thing I know, she's made an offer for this character [in *Biker Boyz*], Chu Chu. I was only supposed to work for four days, but she put me up in the Chateau Marmont in LA for like two months, gave me a huge allowance and just kind of friendlied up with me.

After a month, she said, "I know you said no, but would you meet with the director [on *Hustle & Flow*], he just wants to hear some of your ideas." And I sat down with the director, Craig Brewer, and he started selling me on it too, and I told him, "I just can't go back to the dark side, I can't go back to that place." And he said, "That's why we want you to do it. Everybody else wants to do it because they want to glorify it, and we want you because we know you're not gonna be up there trying to glorify anything [this character] is going through." And I said, "Yeah, but I don't know if I'll be able to

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(L-R) Terrence Howard as DJay, DJ Qualls as Shelby and Anthony Anderson as Key in a scene set in a makeshift recording studio in *Hustle & Flow* (Alan Spearman/Crunk Picture)

come up out of it." You dive into something like that you gotta be able to come up out of it.

And from there, Craig just hounded me for a good six months. He and Stephanie talked to Paramount, MTV, Universal, Focus, and all those studios said, "We will give you the money to do this film, but who are you gonna use?" This is before they had me locked down—in fact, I was still telling them no. And Craig and Stephanie told these studios, "We want to use Terrence Howard." The response they got was, "What label is he on?"

"Terrence Howard, the actor." And the studios were like, "Oh, him? You really wanna work with him? No, no, we can't do that. But you know, if you put Ja Rule in there, or Ludacris in there, we'll give you 5 to 10 million dollars to make it." And Chris and Stephanie really wanted to make that movie, but they said, "No, we want Terrence." You gotta reward that type of stick-to-it-ive-ness. They had faith.

RC: At what point did you read the script?

TH: Oh, I read it that first time. Well no, after I met with Craig. I told him I was gonna read it before we met, and I'm sitting there just BS-ing and he says to me at the end, "You didn't read it, did you?" And I was like, "No, I didn't." He said, "Just do me a favor, just read it,

please. Just promise me you'll read it." And I gave him my word so I read it, and it kind of grew on me a little.

RC: I wanted to ask about the script because the writing is fairly remarkable don't you think?

TH: Well, see, Craig didn't write all of it. I put the "niggers" in. I spent three months down in Memphis talking with these cats, learning the method of their communication. There is no way you can be that character [DJay] without being true to the language he uses. It's not derogatory the way it's used in Memphis. Even though it may have derogatory connotations anywhere else, there it's just part of the communication. And I'm not trying to be politically correct—I could give a hot damn about people in this business, what I'm trying to be is honest. So I put in all those "niggers" and people kept telling me not to, but I was like, no, if we're using Al Capone and Juicy J and all these cats I've spent all this time with, this is how they're talking to me. We didn't have a studio blocking us, telling us what we could and couldn't do. We were open to tell the truth. So let's tell the truth.

RC: I was also really struck by the women in the film, because they are certainly downtrodden, but they're not crushed. And that's a testament to

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“The director was that pimp in a figurative sense—trying to get everything done to produce his first film. I got the most information about that character from a middle-aged white guy.”

—Terrence Howard

Craig, is it not?

TH: Yeah, but Craig was writing about his own life experiences. Craig was DJay. The director was that pimp in a figurative sense—trying to get everything done to produce his first film. I got the most information about that character from a middle-aged white guy.

RC: How do you feel about the film now?

TH: I love it. I mean, we had a hard time because some people in higher places wanted DJay to be harder—John Singleton likes to make tough, tough movies, and he said, “[DJay’s] gotta be hard, he’s gotta be hard.” I was like, if he was hard, then he would be a good pimp, but the fact that he’s a bad pimp is because he cares, because he’s not hard.

RC: So there are a lot of projects happening for you right now—I saw *Lackawanna Blues*, which I liked. Had you worked with George C. Wolfe before?

TH: No, that was the first time, and it is the gem of my career. George stripped me of anything that was comfortable and challenged me, taught me to be specific.

RC: In more mainstream fare, there’s been this recent rash of formulaic films featuring black leads. They’re not necessarily “black films”—they’re not directed or written by black people—but they have black people in them.

And I’m wondering for you, because you’ve done both independent and mainstream films, how you feel your experience is different between something for hire, or a commercial studio film, and a more independent film like *Hustle & Flow* or *Lackawanna Blues*.

TH: My nature is more geared towards independent films. I don’t have an idea of what I’m going to do and oftentimes, unless the script is flexible enough for me to gain weight as a character or to lose weight as a character, I walk around bunched up or too tight. I need the freedom that comes with independent films. We couldn’t have accomplished what we did with *Hustle & Flow* if we’d had a studio behind us. It’s like street-ball players compared to NBA players. NBA players could never accomplish what they accomplish at street-ball because street-ball is all heart—you gotta come with that to really play. Whereas NBA is structure and franchise and whatever they got going with endorsements.

RC: A lot of actors who do both say, “I’ll do a couple of studio films so I can afford to make some independent films.” Is that your model too?

TH: That’s the formula, yeah.

RC: What’s next for you?

TH: I’m looking forward to playing Joe Louis for Spike Lee next year. We’re gonna do his life story.

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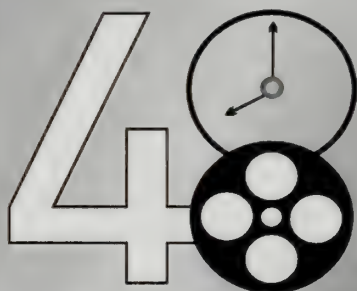
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Taryn Manning as Nola and Terrence Howard as DJay in *Hustle & Flow* (Alan Spearman/Crunk Picture)

RC: Have you worked with Spike?

TH: No.

RC: That'll be a great collaboration.

TH: Then I'm gonna play another cat named Petey Greene, who was a Washington, DC disc jockey in the late 60s and 70s who became a worldwide celebrity and hated that. And then I'll probably retire.

RC: You can't—your audience won't let you.

TH: I'm just tired of being other people. I want to see who I am. And when I say I'm tired, I mean this hustle that I've been on for the last 10 years, every day, 365 days a year—you can't do that forever. You need a rest in between, and then that allows other actors to come in and do what they're gonna do. You can't be greedy and try to hog the whole world, you know? You can only spread your canvas but so far. You may light up the whole house, but only for a minute.

RC: But you must really love some of what you do.

TH: Oh, I love the acting part. I just hate the marketing of it, because I have to become a commodity. And so it's like,

"OK, Terrence, come on! Be this!" I can't do that. It takes a long time to evoke some spirit from some place and if you try to rush it, you might get some spirit from some place you didn't want.

RC: Any interest in directing?

TH: One day. But first I want to develop a whole new way of shooting. The way we're shooting now is archaic, it's wrong.

RC: What do you mean?

TH: We need a whole new camera that can catch real room tones.

RC: Is it a different kind of shooting or a different kind of filmmaking?

TH: A combination of the both, because you have to create a mood on the set for the shooting process, but then the filmmaking itself—it takes a true cinematic, organizational genius to be a great director.

RC: That's why there are so few good directors out there.

TH: There are about three directors in the world right now. The rest are just pretending. ★

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It's Now or Never

Elvis Mitchell gets busy

By Rick Harrison

Elvis lives.

It's true. And in fact, he was reached by phone in room 633 of the Weston Hotel in Southfield, Michigan, not far from Detroit, for this article. He sounded healthy, busy, and happy with where life has taken him. A Weston front desk manager reported no .44-caliber bullet holes in the room's television set.

Of course, Elvis Mitchell (sorry if you had someone else in mind) can be as notoriously restless as any king wearing many crowns and stuck in a stuffy throne room. A film critic, studio development executive, radio and TV show host, visiting Harvard professor, and media pundit, Mitchell will serve as guest curator at this month's Los Angeles Film Festival. Mitchell, who has been sneered at for Hollywood hobnobbing and psychoanalyzed in the press and online after he quit his job reviewing films at *The New York Times* in May 2004 when his colleague A.O. Scott was promoted to chief film critic, doesn't care much what people think of him. He does what he does. And that's more than most.

"I learned from my father that working hard will never kill you," Mitchell says while visiting family in his hometown. "You might wish it does, but it never does."

His father worked a day shift at a dairy plant and nights at an industrial laundry until he retired. His mother, stayed home with Elvis and his eight brothers and sisters.

"I always try to take my life one day at a time," says Mitchell, 44. "Like the advice Kevin Costner gave Tim Robbins in *Bull Durham*."



Elvis Mitchell in Santa Barbara, 2005
(Rebecca Sapp/WireImage.com)

These recent days find Mitchell in some new territory after he accepted a job in February with Columbia Pictures to oversee the studio's New York development and production office as executive production consultant along with producer Deborah Schindler (*Maid in Manhattan*, *Mona Lisa Smile*). And now, he's taking a more prominent role in helping IFP/Los Angeles with their film festival, running June 16–26.

Behind the scenes, Mitchell has helped festival director Richard Raddon and programming director Rachel Rosen for the past few years, offering advice and some program choices. "We just came out of the closet with it this year," Mitchell says. "I'm honored." He will select a number of special screenings and moderate discussions and seminars.

Although the slate of films remains in flux as of this writing, leaving Mitchell

tight-lipped about what to expect, he says he was proud that the festival will be paying tribute to the recently deceased Ossie Davis with a newly discovered print of *Gone Are the Days*, the film adaptation of Davis's play of the same name.

Mitchell, an over 6-foot tall black man with 2-foot long dreadlocks and a taste for Helmut Lang suits, hopes to use his influence to continue the festival's tradition of spotlighting minority filmmakers.

"One of the reasons I'm eager to do this is that they don't treat filmmakers of color as needing to go in this special box," he says. "It's just part of the same experience. Everything intersects and everyone becomes influenced by everyone else. That's important because it says you can't pretend one kind of film is better and the other is some kind of fluke we shall acknowledge only on a periodic basis."

While the prospect of helping advance the racial composition of what appears on screen continues to motivate him, Mitchell doesn't expect it will dominate his choices as a curator or in his development job to the detriment of good storytelling. "I'm a black person in the United States," he says. "I would certainly like to see my life reflected in film, but also love genre films and all those things."

Some media reports, including a particularly stinging *New York* magazine article from May 10, 2004 just as Mitchell was leaving *The Times*, speculated that the move was at least partly based on the departure of his friend and managing editor Gerald Boyd, who provided one of the few other black faces at 229 W. 43rd St. The newspaper isn't exactly called "The Old Gray Lady" because it's equal parts black and white.

But Mitchell submits that his reasons for leaving were quite simple. "They made a change I wasn't happy with so I quit," he says, referring to Scott's promotion. "If I was told that was going to happen when they hired me, I might have thought differently about taking the job."

And as for any discomfort working in such lily-white surroundings, Mitchell

shrugs it off with clearheaded realism. "It is a very white place, but what isn't?" he asks. "Is it whiter than ABC News or *Time* magazine? I've never worked in a place that wasn't predominantly white."

And then there's Harvard, that other bastion of black culture. A graduate of Wayne State University with a degree in English literature, Mitchell has worked two stints at Harvard as a visiting lecturer, teaching courses titled "History of American Film Criticism" and "The African-American Experience in Film: 1930-1970." In October of 2002, Henry Louis Gates, invited Mitchell to deliver the Alain Leroy Locke lectures for the African American studies department.

For his first semester at Harvard, Mitchell flew back and forth to Cambridge from his other full-time job at *The Times*, something that reportedly generated quizzical looks from a few of his colleagues at the paper, and perhaps helped generate a mixed bag of reviews from students. The *Harvard Crimson* reported that his lecturers mostly consisted of watching films and listening to Mitchell talk about them for an hour afterwards, peppered with sporadic reading and writing assignments and the occasional surprise guest culled from his coterie of notable friends, such as Newmarket Films honcho Bob Berney and last-day-of-class treat Bill Murray.

As always, Mitchell is realistic about the learning curve of teaching and how to structure lectures, balancing the films and the readings. "I think I'm learning how to do it, too," he says. "I get better at it all the time."

Mitchell's gigs with Harvard, the LAFF, and Columbia aren't his first forays outside of film criticism. In 1992 Brandon Tartikoff, the NBC programming whiz who served a brief tenure as studio chief at Paramount Pictures, brought his friend Mitchell on board as a vice president of development. Tartikoff left shortly afterwards for personal reasons, and Mitchell, who continued to review films on NPR's Weekend Edition, led to his firing six months later for what Paramount cited as a conflict of duty.

But Mitchell sees that time differently. "It was not a conflict of interest," he says. "I was never going to hide my opinion."

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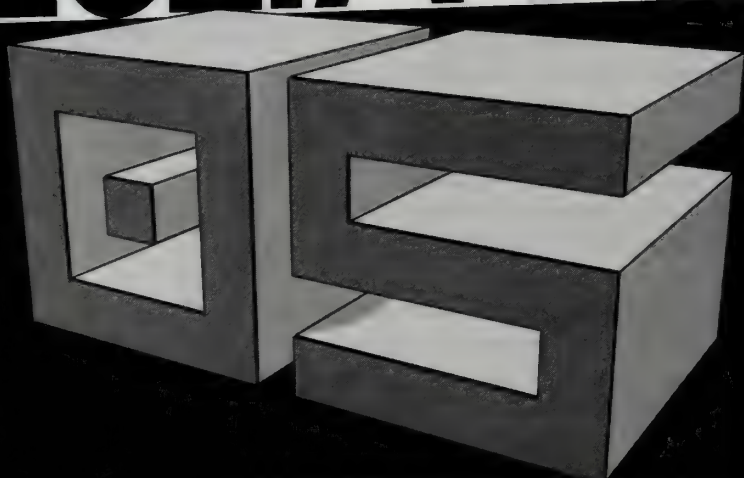
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They told me to tell them what I thought and what kind of films I wanted to see made. As a critic, I couldn't be dishonest anyway. But once Tartikoff left, they really didn't care about me, and I lost my cover. It was like being in Saigon in 1975 trying to get to the roof of the US embassy."

And as for cracks at his character for his self-promotional knack, his glamorous lifestyle, and high-powered industry friends, Mitchell strides past the fray. "I go out to dinner, I dress well," he says. "If you want to create some kind of envy, I don't know what that's all about. I'm not in high school or anything. I've never hid any opinion from anybody. I don't care what anyone says."

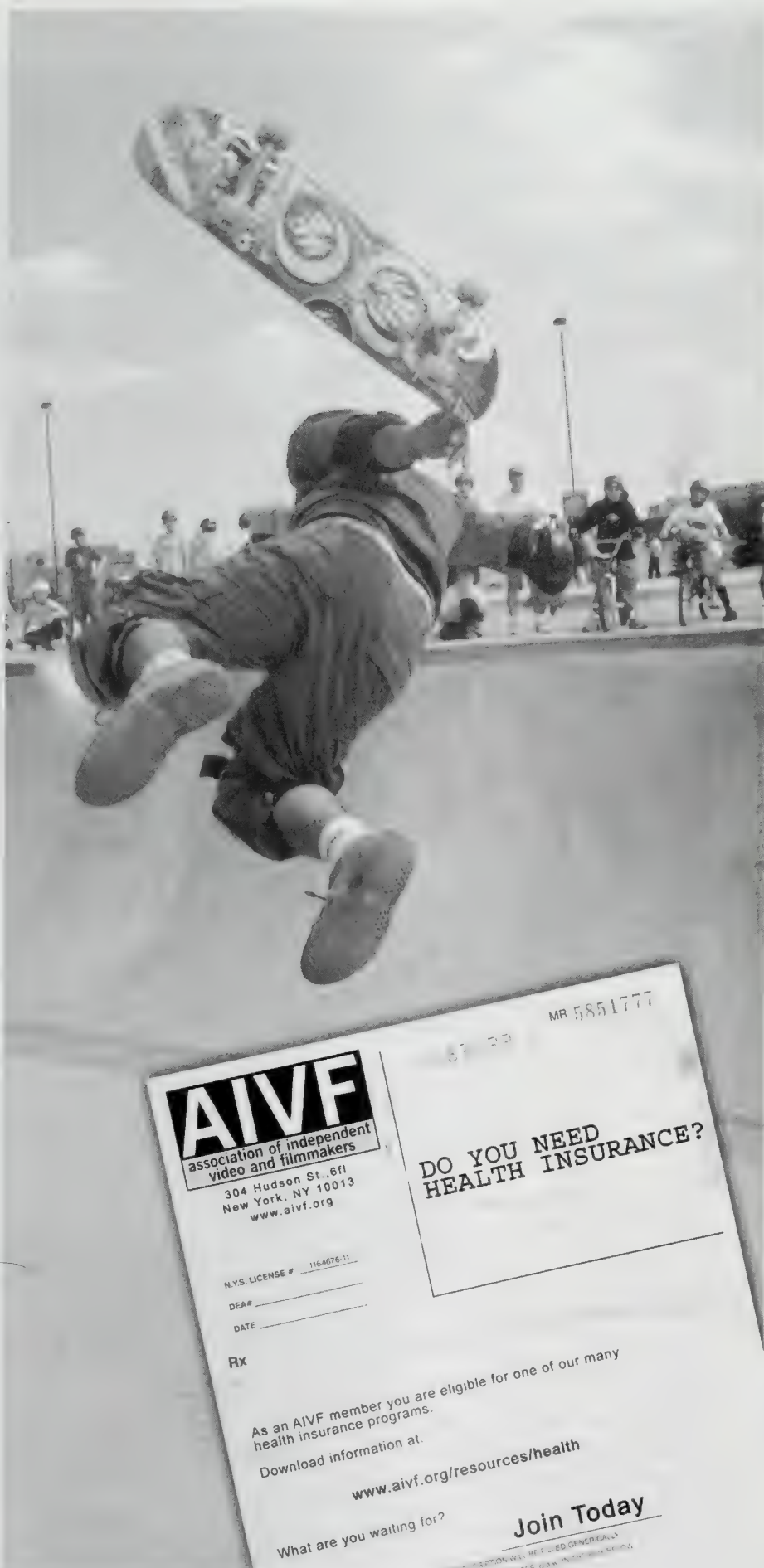
At the moment, Mitchell cares most about obtaining some positive press for the LAFF, something he says has somehow fallen below the festival circuit radar. "It's still defining a role," he says. "I'm not sure why they don't get as much press as they should; it's where movies come from."

One place they don't often come from is Detroit, where Mitchell didn't have any real film or media role models growing up. "This wasn't something I always wanted to do," he says of his multifaceted film career. "I didn't know anyone who grew up making money in the media." As an engineer at his college radio station, he got started reviewing films for that most simple of reasons. "I liked the idea of seeing movies for free," he says. "It made dating really cheaper."

But after stretches at the *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, the *Detroit Free Press*, *L.A. Weekly*, *California* magazine and the hosting duties for "The Treatment" on KCRW and "Independent Focus," an interview program on the Independent Film Channel, Mitchell professes his only long-term goals are more day-to-day *Bull Durham* than *Titanic* king-of-the-world. "I just want to keep working in the industry," he says. "I've been incredibly fortunate; a lot of talented people haven't been as fortunate."

But is he restless? "Restless is probably a good word for it," he says. "It never hurts to have new experiences and keep working. Working can aid learning."

And Elvis Mitchell lives to learn. ★



CHANGES @IFP WEST

BY ELIZABETH ANGELL

In March, board members of IFP West, the Los Angeles branch of the influential indie advocacy and service group, reportedly agreed to rename their organization, removing the IFP brand from their official moniker. The name change is apparently part of IFP West's move to relaunch itself as an autonomous entity, though there is no indication that the organization will alter its mission of supporting independent filmmakers. The new group will continue to run the Los Angeles Film Festival (which runs this month) and the Independent Spirit Awards, two enormously successful and popular events wholly owned by IFP LA.

Though no official announcement was made at the time this issue went to print, the proposed change sent ripples through the independent film community. The issues at stake are part of a larger debate about the character and future of independent film, and some filmmakers and indie advocates worry that this move is a part of a larger trend away from true independence and towards a kind of compromised "Indiewood." Has a community that once prided itself on its outsider status refashioned itself in Hollywood's image?

The six IFP branches—Los Angeles, New York, Miami, Chicago, Seattle, and Minneapolis—have always had a loose affiliation. The Independent Features Project was founded in New York in 1979 as a place where filmmakers could meet and share ideas and contacts. Soon it began to make equipment available to its members and to help them learn how to use it. "It was a gathering place for independent filmmakers," says Peter Belsito, one of IFP's founding members. "Nothing like that existed at the time."

Belsito helped found IFP West a year later. Though at the time there was talk of aligning the two organizations more closely, they remained separate entities, each with their own





Dawn Hudson and Vondie Curtis Hall at the 20th Annual IFP Independent Spirit Awards Show in Santa Monica, California 2005 (Randall Michelson/WireImage.com)

boards, staffs, and fundraising arms. The other regional offices were opened shortly thereafter, and each followed the same pattern. Today, they share a website and a magazine, *Film-maker*, but little else.

Though a younger sibling to IFP New York, IFP West has become the biggest of the IFP branches, with an annual revenue stream of close to \$4 million and more than 6,000 members. By comparison, New York pulls in just over \$2 million and has a membership base of about 2,000. The remaining four have budgets that hover well under \$1 million and a combined membership of just over 1,000 members. IFP West, in other words, has become the 800-pound gorilla of the group.

IFP West owes a good deal of this impressive budget and higher profile to the Independent Spirit Awards, which the group launched in 1984. Over the past 20 years, the Indie Spirits have become a very big deal. Though they are billed as the "laid-back yin to Oscar's yang," they are just as much a cannily marketed celebrity fest as their mainstream doppelganger. The event is self-consciously tied to the Oscars timetable, always taking place the Saturday before the Academy Awards. When that ceremony moved from March to February a few years ago in order to stave off award-season fatigue, the Indie Spirits migrated with them. Held in a massive tent in Santa Monica, the Indies now attract easily as many stars as the Oscars, and dressed in jeans and floaty summer dresses, they look like they're having a much better time.

The awards now attract a strictly A-list crowd. Tom Cruise was the honorary chair of 2004's ceremony, and while they have traditionally been hosted by John Waters, the Indie Spirits were helmed this year by Samuel L. Jackson. They are now broadcast on the Independent Film

Channel and AMC and covered aggressively by tabloids and industry press alike. High profile sponsors have signed on, presumably to take advantage of the appealing blend of star power and indie credibility.

The Indie Spirits have been the source of some controversy in recent years. To some, the nomination process appears frustratingly opaque. A committee of around a dozen people selects candidates in each category, and then the nominees are voted on by the membership of every IFP branch. And while there is a special slot for films with a budget under \$500,000—the John Cassavetes Award—many have complained that the Indies celebrate films that have already had plenty of attention. This year, *Sideways* swept the awards, and past best picture winners have included *Lost In Translation* (2004), *Far From Heaven* (2003), and *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* (2000)—all films with major publicity budgets that were honored by the Academy as well.

“There’s a lot more they could do to make sure that the film with the biggest budget, that spent the most marketing

equipment rentals, and other professional services.

There are critics, however, who feel that the circus of the Indie Spirits is a distraction from the IFP’s core mission, which is to serve independent filmmakers who want to work outside the Hollywood system. “In general, filmmakers are more aware of organizations [like IFP] because they have gained such a high profile, which is great,” says Risa Morimoto, the executive director of Asian Cinevision. “Unfortunately, the downside is that sometimes a huge high-profile event like the Independent Spirit Awards can take away from the other, smaller programs that help to develop and nurture the filmmakers at the beginning stages of their careers.”

Filmmaker Jim McKay, one of *Brother to Brother*’s producers, says: “You can only say ‘we’re going Hollywood so we can pay for our good, smaller programs’ for so long, until you’re no longer *going* Hollywood, you’ve *gone* there and the good programs are just a token. Hey, even the Bush administration puts money in the budget for a couple good things that help some people.”

The other IFP branches, though they see none of the cash that flows into IFP West, will certainly feel the loss of their association with the Indie Spirits and the cachet of a California counterpart. IFP West has most of the organization’s star power and that brings traffic to the website and attention to all the branches. “I think a lot of the members appreciate the feeling of being part of a larger organization,” says one IFP insider who was unwilling to go on record. “The most valuable stuff that we do is local, but people really like voting for the Indie Spirits, and they like the feeling that they are part of something with an LA and a New York presence.”

And for its part, IFP New York has worked hard to step up its profile in recent years. IFP New York’s answer to

the Indies, The Gotham Awards, were launched in 1991. They honor members of New York’s independent film community and were traditionally held in September, at the end of the annual feature film market. Last year, the Gothams moved to December, the thick of awards season, and IFP broadened the scope of the awards. Many saw this as a sign that New York hoped to see the Gothams compete with the Indie Spirits.

In April, a new Producers Group was launched under the IFP banner, made up of more than 50 representatives from many of the city’s leading independent production companies, including Killer Films, This is That, and Greenstreet. They are many of the city’s main players, and their official association with IFP was a welcome formalization of longstanding ties. The group has launched a major initiative to quantify how much independent filmmakers spend annually in New York and to organize themselves to advocate for common causes—from measures that will make shooting in the city easier to the screener ban that has caused so much consternation in the film community in recent years.



Ted Sarandos of Netflix and Dawn Hudson of IFP/LA at the IFP Independent Spirit Awards Nominee BBQ (Randall Michelson/WireImage.com)



Cuba Gooding Jr. and Lee Daniels at the 14th Annual Gotham Awards in New York City (Dimitrios Kambouris/WireImage.com)

dollars, doesn’t sweep the awards,” says Rodney Evans, a director whose film, *Brother to Brother*, was nominated for Best First Feature this year.

Evans is quick to add, though, that the attention his film received at the Indie Spirits this year was a huge boost. “A small film like mine really does benefit from getting national exposure on TV,” he says. “I didn’t have the resources to do national advertising.”

The IFP’s defenders argue that the good that comes from all the hoopla far outweighs the bad. Cozying up to the celebrity machine seems a small price to pay for the attention and money that is lavished on independent films, and IFP West has a lot more money to spend on its programs. “What we were able to do for filmmakers back in 1991 is laughable,” IFP executive director Dawn Hudson told *Variety* at the time of the 2005 Indie Spirits. “We are able to help filmmakers so much more now.” She pointed out that membership dues have stayed under \$100 (\$95) and IFP has continued to offer numerous labs, mentorship programs,

No one at IFP West would comment on the reasons for the possible secession, but many have speculated that the group has simply outgrown the old system of allegiances. LA may not want to defer to its siblings on what direction the Indie Spirits should take and they may want to compete more aggressively—even directly—for scarce resources. As a separate entity, for example, LA might be able to further expand its sponsorship base without having to defer to New York or Chicago when it comes to sponsors on the East Coast or in the Mid-West.

"This is a problem that we all have," says the executive director of another service organization who wished to remain anonymous. "We're all going after the same pool of funders and sponsors."

IFP is not the only organization at a crossroads. Many groups report that they are taking stock of the programs they offer their members and constituents and of what the future might hold for advocacy and service organizations. "I think it gets down to two key things," says Fidelma McGinn, the executive director of

used to belong only to experienced professionals are now largely available to anyone with an internet connection.

"Historically, the great advantage of access centers is that they provided media-making tools that were largely inaccessible because they were expensive and required a great deal of training and knowledge," says Charlie Humphrey, who heads up Pittsburgh Filmmakers, one of the largest and oldest independent media arts centers in the country. "But now, the barriers to entry in the media arts are almost completely gone. What was once a great asset to these centers—namely equipment and knowledge—are no longer an asset. It's a funny paradox, because in many ways what has occurred is precisely what we have wanted for many years, which is the democratization of media, the tools, the access, everything. But here we stand with our arms akimbo saying now what?"

Service groups have had to refocus their energies on their value as a site for networking and as educational and advocacy organizations. "We still have to do what we've always done best which is to trade in the currency of knowledge," Humphrey says. "We

have to continue to make the case that media literacy is really cultural literacy and that just because you can learn how to wave a mouse doesn't necessarily mean that you know how to make good media."

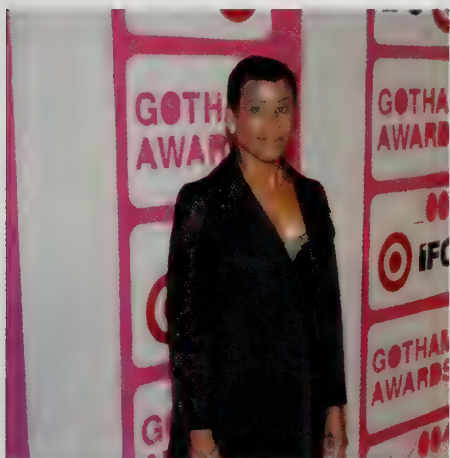
Many leaders of service organizations agree that one benefit they can continue to provide for their members is a venue for showing new work. Despite the enormous popularity of independent films in recent years, most movies never reach an audience. Filmmakers who continue to work at the lowest end of the spectrum struggle for exposure, and groups like IFP can do enormous good by regularly screening their work.

Whatever the future of IFP West, the changes afoot are symptomatic of something the whole industry must come to

grips with. Independent filmmakers are no longer outsiders, and their work is not being ignored. Many indies have the budgets and profit margins of studio vehicles. There are countless production companies devoted to making these films, and film schools are churning out more eager graduates every year. Will groups like the IFP cater increasingly to this high profile group or will they remain committed to the lowliest filmmakers, the mavericks who make \$5,000 films funded entirely on credit card debt? Do they even have to choose?

Perhaps in the near future there can be a group where everyone finds a home. ★

Just before this magazine went to press, IFP/LA announced that it had in fact decided to break from the five other IFP branches, and will now operate under the new name of Film Independent (FIND). The five other branches are expected to stay unified.



Michelle Byrd, executive director of IFP New York, at the 14th Annual Gotham Awards in 2004 (Dimitrios Kambouris/WireImage.com)



Zach Braff (*Garden State*) and Dawn Hudson, executive director of IFP/West at the 20th Annual IFP Independent Spirit Awards (Jeff Vespa/WireImage.com)

San Francisco's Film Arts Foundation. "We all have the same challenge of keeping ourselves relevant to our member base and finding ways to stay solvent."

To some degree, these organizations are a victim of the meteoric rise of the independent film industry. When the IFP was founded, independent filmmaking was still in its infancy, though enthusiasm was growing steadily. New, portable equipment designed for news and documentaries have made filmmaking outside the studio system possible, and the counter culture ethos of the 60s and 70s fueled young filmmakers' desire to make both more political and more personal work. Service organizations found a natural niche helping filmmakers gain access to expensive equipment, offering workshops on technique and practice and providing a meeting place where people could discuss their aesthetic and artistic concerns, while connecting with funders and distributors.

However, digital equipment is cheap today and almost universally accessible. The crucial information and skills that



Director Bradley Beesley with Flaming Lips lead singer Wayne Coyne (Shout! Factory)

BY NICK SCHAGER

"Get on the ground, motherfuckers," declares Wayne Coyne, directing two somewhat confused kids to lie on their chests in the dingy kitchen of a Vietnamese noodle bar.

The lead singer for psychedelic post-punk rock band The Flaming Lips, Coyne isn't perpetrating a hold-up but is reenacting a 1977 gunpoint robbery he experienced while employed at the eatery—which, at the time, had been a Long John Silver's fast food restaurant where he worked as a \$60-a-week fry cook (and where, because of his 12-year tenure, he earned a diamond pin for long service). With lively good humor and a trace of mischievousness, Coyne races through the back room, pointing out the entry and exit routes used by the daring daylight crooks while remembering how close he had once come to being a statistic. "I just thought, 'My god, this is really how you die,'" he says. "One minute you're just cooking up someone's order of french fries, and the next minute you're laying on the floor and they blow your brains out. And there's no music, there's no significance—it's just random."

Beautifully capturing the essence of The Flaming Lips and

their wonderfully weird music—unpredictable, eccentric, slightly insane, and laced with equal measures of joy and sorrow—this early scene is the highlight of Bradley Beesley's *The Fearless Freaks*, a sterling documentary about the life and times of the Oklahoma-bred band. As Coyne later recalls during a phone conversation from his Oklahoma City home, the near-death experience wound up being a formative catalyst for his subsequent career as the frontman for one of America's most unique and idiosyncratic rock and roll outfits.

"Immediately after it happened, you get this sense that you've been given a whole new life, and now you can do whatever you want," he says, describing how the area had been plagued by fast food restaurant murders and that it therefore wouldn't have been uncommon to be killed while deep frying chicken. "For the next couple of weeks, [I had] the idea that, why not do what you want to do? What's the worst that can happen? That you get humiliated and people make fun of you? I was like, I can handle that. I just had a gun shoved up to my temple by these

What a Long, Freaky *Head-Trip* It's Been

BRADLEY BEESLEY'S THE FEARLESS F R E A K S



pissed-off robbers. If people laugh at me, I don't care."

Such a go-for-broke, devil-may-care spirit of adventurousness is indicative of not only The Flaming Lips—whose eclectic catalog spans from 1986's *Here It Is* to 2002's *Yoshimi Battles the Pink Robots*, including the unique 1997 four-CD album *Zaireeka* that required fans to listen to all four discs concurrently—but also Beesley's fascinating new documentary, which premiered at this year's South by Southwest Festival and made its DVD debut last month through Shout! Factory releases. Overflowing with behind-the-scenes footage and forthright interviews with the band, which also includes bassist Michael

Ivins and drummer/instrumentalist Steven Drozd, the film is a kaleidoscopic pastiche of candid conversations and surprising confessions that chart the band's 22-year evolution from small-town novelty act (originally fronted by Wayne's brother Mark in 1983) to one-hit wonder (with 1994's MTV hit "She Don't Use Jelly") to 2003 Grammy award-winners (for Best Rock Instrumental Performance). A loving portrait made from the inside out, it's a funny and touching rock doc more interested in its subjects' personal stories than with regurgitating concert footage and music videos, imbued with an intimacy rarely found in a genre all-too-often dominated by shallow, exploitative "Behind the Music"-style fluff.

Beesley, a documentarian from Austin, Texas, cut his filmmaking teeth working with the Lips in 1992 as a student at the University of Oklahoma, where he attended the same art school as Coyne's then-girlfriend (and now wife) Michelle. "I happened to be the guy who owned a motion picture film camera instead of a video camera, and Wayne was the guy in town who had enough money to shoot motion picture film, so I sort of spent my college years experimenting with Wayne on the [band's] music videos," he says. Not content with merely working on these low-budget videos, Beesley, whose interest always strayed toward experimental cinema verité filmmaking, would shoot everything and anything he could while around the band: downtime in the studio and on the band's video sets, Coyne family parties, backstage tour shenanigans, and random cinematographic tests with Coyne that included putting Christmas lights inside the camera ("To see if we could get some weird lens flare flicker effect") and squirting bleach on the film itself.

Beesley and the Lips' relationship flourished thanks in part to their shared interest in out-there audaciousness. "We fueled each other's fire," Beesley says. In agreement, Coyne says, "He's always doing something interesting, and I'm always needing help. So it works out good."

In 1999, Beesley, realizing he had accumulated roughly 400 hours of unused footage, put together a 45-minute short film entitled *The Flaming Lips Have Landed* that played at SXSW in 2000, and shortly thereafter decided that he had enough material for a feature film. He set about conducting interviews with the band, former members, and admirers (including Liz Phair, The White Stripes' Jack White, and The Butthole Surfers' Gilby Clarke), while also looking into bizarre stories from Coyne and Drozd's pasts (such as the Long John Silver scene) that he'd long wanted to investigate. Because of Beesley's regular attendance at holiday gatherings, as well as his collaboration with Coyne (as director of photography) on projects such as the singer's directorial debut, *Christmas on Mars*—an independent film about the red planet's first yuletide celebration starring the Lips which, as of this article's writing, is still being shot in the singer's backyard—the band's relatives were familiar with his tendency to regularly show up in the neighborhood with a film camera. So he had little trouble convincing Coyne's mother, his brothers Tommy and Kenny, and Drozd's brother James to participate. James, the day after being released from prison, joined in an impromptu jam session alongside his brother Steven and his saxophone-playing father Vernon.

Beesley's explanation for focusing less on concert clips and more on the band members' peculiar backstories and amusing anecdotes—including the story behind Coyne's penchant for performing with a bloody forehead (it involves an inspirational Miles Davis photo) and his methodical technique for cleaning said blood off his trademark white suits—is simple. "There's only so much live footage and so many music videos people can take," he says. Of particular interest to Beesley was the fact that the down-to-earth Coyne still lives among crack dealers and prostitutes in the dilapidated Oklahoma City ghetto in which he grew up, residing with his wife and dogs mere miles away from his relatives. "I thought it was more important to the story that this guy could have gone to LA or New York like everybody else, but he stayed in the same neighborhood he grew up in, and continues to live there," he says. The director's interest in the Lips' strange childhoods was further bolstered by the discovery that Coyne's brother Kenny possessed countless hours of Super 8 home movies of the family's football games (their team's name, *The Fearless Freaks*, gives Beesley's doc its title), as well as by hearing stories about the singer's wild youthful exploits. One such tale cut from the final film depicts a 12-year-old Coyne taking off to California on the back of a motorcycle with his brothers, only to realize he's forgotten to bring shoes along for the trip.

Coyne admits that if another filmmaker had approached him with plans for such a probing documentary he probably would have bristled at the idea. However, his relationship with Beesley, as well as his faith in the filmmaker's abilities, gave him no rea-



Wayne Coyne performing with The Flaming Lips (Shout! Factory)

son to object to the project. "You build a kind of honesty and an ego-less partnership" after years of working together, says Coyne. "And Bradley really does have a knack for finding that universal human story within the context of all this stuff that you think should be exciting." Stuff, presumably, like the Lips' carnivalesque live shows, which feature Coyne using fake blood to simulate head wounds, naked female dancers, musicians in furry animal costumes, and the singer "walking" on the crowd inside a giant translucent bubble. "It's the things that he thinks are funny and poignant, that's the part that I really trust," he says. Given Beesley's prior focus on small, character-driven stories in 2000's *Hill Stomp Hollar* and 2001's *Okie Noodling* (both of which feature music by The Flaming Lips), Coyne was sure that the filmmaker's interest in making *The Fearless Freaks* had less to do with the band's recent surge in popularity over the past half-decade than with his continued fascination with weird, colorful people. "I knew that Bradley would make a film that made us look far better than we really are," he says. "And he would have it [focus on] the human element, not that we're rock stars and that we make a lot of money."

The Lips' trust in Beesley is most clearly felt in a stunning third-act showstopper shot in 2001 in which Drozd, a serious heroin addict during the previous six years, walks Beesley through the process of shooting up while lucidly detailing his path to junkiedom. Shot in stark black-and-white close-ups that convey a sense of palpable immediacy—a stylistic choice Beesley admits was largely due to good luck: "I think it was just because I had black-and-white film stock in the fridge left over from Wayne"—the scene came about after Drozd, who had recently sold his car for a paltry couple of hundred dollars, repeatedly called the filmmaker trying to borrow cash for drugs. "I was like, 'All right, I'll give you \$50, but you have to let me

film you shooting up,” Beesley says. “And not only do you have to do that, but you have to talk about where you’re at right now, how you got there, why you’re there, and really think about this stuff as you’re telling me.”

The resulting scene finds Drozd candidly, and harrowingly, expounding on his first foray into mainlining heroin, the physical sensation of a smack high, and the terrible cost of his addiction (his girlfriend had just left him at the time of the filming)—all as he struggles to find a viable vein to inject. Yet despite the moment being intensely personal and private, Beesley felt that, considering Drozd’s subsequent ability to kick his habit, the scene had to make the film’s final cut. “That was probably the second to last time he shot up, so I’m proud to have captured it,” he says. “Knowing that he’s been clean since 2001 when we shot that, I think it made everyone feel good about the story, to have some closure. And it would be remiss of me not to [include it], since it was such a huge part of their history for six years—this genius musician on heroin—and had such a profound effect on the band.”

Coyne remembers Drozd’s drug use becoming so severe that “there’d be times when I thought he was probably never going to get over this, and he’ll be a toothless old man that won’t have anything to show for all this great music he’s been able to create.” With Drozd now sober, however, Coyne admits he doesn’t even think about such dire possibilities, and the enthusiastic reaction to the scene at the packed SXSW premiere—which Coyne says was an “awesome” experience in which he became caught up in the moviegoing audience’s excitement—simply reconfirmed his initial feeling that the scene was a necessary component of Beesley’s cinematic biography. “Our story really is a wonderful, wonderful story,” Coyne says. “It’s not without its hard moments, and I’m sure we’ll have more to come. And I can tell people this is the absolute truth. This isn’t some exaggeration that people are trying to look cool by. I’m here to tell you, this is a real guy and these are real drugs and this is a real story. We’re living proof that, as bad as it can be, it’s also as good as it can turn out.”

Such unvarnished honesty, in fact, is perhaps the overriding sense one gets from *The Fearless Freaks*, which may craft its own version of The Flaming Lips story but is nonetheless imbued with an unblinking candor and authenticity similar to that found in the Lips’ emotionally charged music. It’s an impression Coyne—a rock and roll star who comes across throughout the film (as well as during interviews) as simultaneously larger-than-life and imminently approachable—is eager to promote. Returning to a discussion of his life-affirming run-in with mortality at Long John Silver’s, Coyne says he thinks “mostly what people fear is that other people won’t understand them. And I just know if you tell the absolute truth and just don’t let there be any options [as to what’s real and what’s fictional], people will relate to you. We don’t want people to think that some PR firm has gotten together with us and told us, ‘This is the best story to tell.’ I want to be believed. I want people to trust me.” Thanks to Beesley’s affectionate, illuminating, and persuasive documentary, Coyne has nothing to worry about. ★



Band members Wayne, Richard, Mark, and Michael
(J. Michelle Martin-Coyne)



Beesley with Coyne: Filming Christmas on Mars
(Shout! Factory)



Flaming Lips: Michael, Wayne, and Nathan
(J. Michelle Martin-Coyne)

Portland's *Creative Class* Behind the Scenes at PDX

BY BRIAN LIBBY

Matt McCormick bristles a little when he hears someone mention that this is the third year of the Portland Documentary and Experimental Film Festival (PDX). For McCormick, festival curator and a well-regarded filmmaker, the PDX Fest stretches back to 1996, when his Peripheral Produce screening series debuted in local punk rock clubs and industrial warehouses—when contemporary filmmakers like Miranda July, whose film *Me and You and Everyone We Know* won a Special Jury Prize at Sundance this year, and Sam Green, whose documentary *The Weather Underground* was nominated last year for an Academy Award, received some of their first exposure. Today, Peripheral Produce is comprised not only of the PDX Festival, but also a thriving distribution company for experimental film and video on DVD.

The PDX Fest has become an internationally recognized mid-tier festival, which was held in April at the Guild Theatre in Portland, Oregon and included about 88 different film and video shorts and features. And with Peripheral Produce the organization, helped galvanize the grassroots, do-it-yourself culture once restricted to music but with the rise of affordable video production equipment in recent years, has extended to the screen. “You can’t go three weeks in Portland without there being some kind of [film] festival,” McCormick says, noting that locally, PDX follows the Portland International Film Festival, the Portland Jewish Film Festival, and the Longbaugh Film Festival offered by local alternative paper *Willamette Week*. “I think the success of Peripheral Produce helped spur what is happening.”

When he’s not running the PDX Fest or the video distribution side of Peripheral Produce, McCormick’s work as a filmmaker has screened at many festivals, including Sundance, Rotterdam, the New York Underground, and the New York Film Festival. His most recent films, *The Subconscious Art of*



Tightrope artist Adil Hoxur in *Kings of the Sky*, which screened at PDX. (Deborah Stratman)



Scott Coleman Miller's *Usto Justo* was one of the festival's experimental shorts

Graffiti Removal (2002), and *Towlines* (2005), have particularly found favor while touring around the world. When Peripheral Produce began, McCormick was able to curate screening events largely because he was able to approach filmmakers as a peer. And indeed, before Miranda July and other celebrated local artists like Vanessa Renwick were Peripheral Produce regulars, there were a whole host of artists whom McCormick befriended while touring with his own work.

Unlike a previous generation of experimental filmmakers who came of age during the 60s and on through the 80s, McCormick is, while not out to make a buck per se, nevertheless more open to the notion that being a small businessperson and a respected artist need not be mutually exclusive. In fact, he

says, running Peripheral Produce as a company unbound to government or foundation grants means all the more independence to run his art and his institution the way he wants.

Certainly the spread of DIY punk rock ethic to filmmaking and its corresponding microcinemas is happening on some level in virtually every American metropolis. Cities like Austin, Baltimore, and Chicago all have particularly healthy film communities. But things seem to have particularly crystallized in the Rose City because of its high ratio of what is now commonly referred to as the "creative class"—a phrase that originated with the 2002 Richard Florida book, *The Rise of the Creative Class*.

With its picturesque natural surroundings, its place on the West Coast (the natural end to many a migration, be it 200



Matt McCormick is festival curator and a well-regarded filmmaker (courtesy of Matt McCormick)



John Hawkes and Miranda July (who first screened her work at the Peripheral Produce series) in *Me and You and Everyone We Know* (IFC Films)

years ago in a covered wagon or today after the college spring semester ends), and its relative affordability compared to Seattle or San Francisco, Portland is home to countless 20-somethings with an eagerness to explore and ultimately prove their artistic mettle without compromising the integrity they see lost all around them amid a hugely omnipresent commercial media culture.

"People come to Portland to drop out but keep a hand in," says Shawn Levy, film critic for the *Oregonian* daily newspaper. "To do stuff that would be notable in most any city in the world but on a more homemade, personal level. To be engaged in their work but not invested in the business of it. Peripheral Produce is that vibe in a nutshell."

Deborah Stratman, whose film *The Great Art of Unknowing* screened at this year's fest, says: "McCormick and Peripheral Produce have faith in the intelligence and curiosity of their audiences. They don't see any reason why independent films can't be as widely collected as independent music. I think Matt distributes and tours with that goal in mind...a world where people's video collections begin to rival their CD collections. And I really admire the ways that they chip away at dispelling

the myth of 'marginal' work. To me, all of the films they program [at PDX Fest] are conduits to the complicated, seamy center of the contemporary socio-cultural zeitgeist. This is work at the fulcrum, not on the margins."

McCormick—who mines the industrial enclaves of urban America to find surprisingly poetic vistas—and Peripheral Produce label-mate Bill Brown—whose travelogues contemplate history, politics, geography, and art with wit and unpretentious wisdom—ensure that many of the works collected on their videos and programmed at PDX appeal to a widespread audience. Too often people assume that because it does not rigidly adhere to the narrow classification of traditional narrative dramatic storytelling, experimental film is never to be understood, let alone beloved, by large audiences. But that simply is not the case.

"Experimental has always been a tricky term," says filmmaker David Gatten from Ithaca, New York. "Avant garde, underground, alternative, personal, and experimental are all names given to a pretty diverse body of work. One of the things that I think PDX is always noteworthy for is the way they bring together all of these threads, showcasing really diverse kinds of experimental media side by side."

Stratman says: "People say experimental film is undergoing a renaissance. But I think the whole universe of what we call experimental film is itself a continual renaissance. That's what experimental film is to me: a constant upheaval of cultural sedimentation. A continual turning over and reinventing and poking into."

And, of course, there was experimental and underground work happening long before Peripheral Produce came out—filmmakers like Maya Deren and Kenneth Anger were pioneers in the genre. But the difference between then and now is today's distribution opportunities and the chance for the work to be seen and obtained much more easily. Neither Deren nor Anger ever had the advantage of a company like Netflix, for example. And maybe they wouldn't have wanted that. Until the mid-1990s, most of the significant underground work was made on actual celluloid film. And to an extent, that continues to be the case today. But more crucial is the fact that regardless of its original format, most of the films were not available on video for sales and distribution. Even today there are filmmakers who refuse to have their films transferred to video, particularly more academic and avant-garde artists like Peter Hutton and David Gatten, both of whose work has played at PDX but who will almost certainly never find a wider audience without video or digital duplication. It is all but a moral imperative for these artists that the adherence to celluloid-only projection be maintained. Otherwise, they believe, the work itself would be irrevocably compromised.

Peripheral Produce, however, represents a more pragmatic constituency. Last year alone the company sold over 4,000 copies of various VHS and DVD units. Artists on Peripheral Produce's distribution label include—in addition to McCormick, Brown, July, and Renwick—Brian Frye, Naomi Uman, Animal Charm, Bryan Boyce, and Negativland. In many cases, their work was created on video and therefore isn't subject to the dilemma of whether a transfer of video compromises artistic integrity.



POPaganda: The Art & Subversion of Ron English, screened at the opening night of the festival (Ron English)

But Renwick, considered a maverick in Portland for her iconoclastic, very personal works that are mostly shot on film and transferred for distribution by Peripheral Produce, doesn't see the downside.

"Having Matt put out my work has been great for me," Renwick says. "It gave me this product to sell at my shows that I didn't have before." And when you're an underground artist scratching and clawing to make a living, she says, that can be the difference between surviving and having to give up your dreams and take a day job. "It really gave me some more exposure," Renwick says. "Those videos have gotten around." Even though she tours all over the country, Renwick says many people are familiar with her work through seeing it on video.

There is probably no better representation of the overall engaging spirit of the PDX Fest and the unique perspective of Peripheral Produce than its marquee event, the Peripheral Produce Invitationals. Billed cheekily as the "world championship of experimental cinema," the Invitationals are a one-night screening of about 20 films, with all the competing artists in attendance and an audience vote for the winner at the end. Serious competition is not the predominant vibe, but rather camaraderie both between the artists and with their audience.

Renwick, who won the first annual Invitationals, says the experience remains one of her favorite memories as a filmmaker. "There were a lot of people from out of town, and we

got to meet artists who we had only seen their work before," she recalls. "I have lots of friends around the country now that I first got to know from that show."

Last year's Invitationals have become the stuff of legend in Portland, with the audience most delighted not by a traditional film or video, but Viewmasters—handmade circular slideshow cards courtesy of a local artist named Vladimir. At last year's Invitationals, Vladimir passed out her personal collection of Viewmasters to the audience (they had to be returned) and then led them through a reading of one of her slideshows (about a cockroach), complete with the traditional bell-ringing sound for when it was time to click the next image into view.

"At one moment during the show," *The Oregonian's* Levy recalls, "I looked around the theater and there were 380 Portland hipsters, as jaded and cynical a lot as you'd find, staring into their Viewmasters like little kids with big, unrehearsed grins on their faces."

There will always be those in the underground film community who resist the more populist experimental strain at the PDX Fest. Yet this is a festival run for the right reasons, behind the scenes, and year-round. And while the quality at any festival can vary greatly from film to film, the PDX Fest—whether considered in its third or ninth year—and Peripheral Produce, passionately and faithfully represent an admirable breadth of experimental film. ★



BY FIONA NG

To most people, Jeff Skoll is the eBay guy. He was the first employee and first president of the online auction behemoth. With over \$4 billion worth of eBay stock, he was named the third richest man under 40 in the country by *Fortune* magazine in 2004. What most people don't know about Skoll is that he is also a committed do-gooder. In 1999, he founded The Skoll Foundation, which champions and invests in people who create positive changes in the world. Now, this well-heeled philanthropist is extending his humanitarianism to what some might consider the least conscientious, most bottom-line conscious of all industries: Hollywood.

Skoll started Participant Productions, a production company based in Los Angeles, in January 2004. The thing that separates Participant from other film outfits is its social mandate: to make films and documentaries addressing societal injustices that are as thoughtful in content as they are boffo in box office. Successful examples the company is fond of citing include blockbusters *Erin*

***An eBay-
billionaire
believes
humanist
films can sell***



George Clooney and Matt Damon star in the Warner Bros/Participant Productions's *Syriana* (Glen Wilson)

Brockovich (2000), *Gandhi* (1982), and *Schindler's List* (1993). The plan is to generate four to six films a year, with a budget between \$5–40 million each. Unlike other production companies, Participant will both co-finance and manage the productions of these projects.

Idealism aside, Skoll, the company's CEO, knows that he's still new to the business of entertainment. "The movie business is entirely different [from other businesses]," Skoll says. "It is a very, very relationship-driven business, and it's pretty vital to be able to know people, interact with them, spend time with them, and really be part of the social network." (Following his own advice, Skoll has been upping his profile in the film world—jurying for the documentary feature competition at last year's Tribeca, and, in keeping with Participant's mission, presenting *Gandhi* to a Palestinian audience in Ramallah in April.) Mindful of the industry's culture and the company's particular concerns, Skoll has assembled a team of players from Hollywood and beyond, including Jeff Ivers from MGM and the Motion Picture Corporation of America, erstwhile dot-comer Chris Adams, previously with

Lycos and Amazon.com, former for-profit and nonprofit management consultant Joanne Wilson, and Ricky Strauss, a Hollywood veteran who was anointed president of the company in March.

Bringing to Participant his experience as an independent producer for Sony, Strauss foresees distribution as presenting the biggest challenge. "We are a brand new company, and we are doing something no one else has otherwise done before," Strauss says. "For most mainstream Hollywood theatrical distributors these are the harder movies to make money on. They present marketing challenges. They are not as popular on a studio slate. So [we thought] finding great material would somehow be easier than finding distributors to satisfy that appetite."

So far, finding distributors has been nearly effortless for the company, given its slate of aspirant blockbusters and choice partnerships with major studios and Indiewood outfits. Last year, Participant bought all the rights to *Arna's Children*, a documentary about a Palestinian activist who opened a theater group for kids in a refugee camp, and released it in October with THINKFilm. Also last year, Participant and Warner Bros. announced a three-picture co-financing deal. The first project *Syriana*, a spy thriller about the international oil trade and the Middle East (written by *Traffic* scribe Stephen Gaghan, produced by Steven Soderbergh and George Clooney, and starring Clooney and Matt Damon is set to bow this fall.) The second film is yet another would-be tentpole about a group of woman mineworkers filing a sexual harassment lawsuit against the men they work with. The film, which is currently in production and untitled,

stars a triumvirate of Oscar winners including Charlize Theron, Frances McDormand, and Sissy Spacek. The third project is *Truce*, to be helmed by *House Of Sand And Fog* director Vadim Perelman and is still in development. Other projects in development at Participant include Clooney's sophomore directorial effort, *Good Night, And, Good Luck*; the doc *The World According to Sesame Street*; and an adaptation of the bestseller memoir *Reading Lolita in Tehran*.

Not a bad roster for the company's first year in business. But given its A-list affiliations, isn't it easy to assume that Participant's leanings are as correspondingly commercial? Given its social mandate, Strauss says Participant's vision is much more in line with the world of independent filmmaking, but stresses that to achieve their goal of creating and disseminating socially conscious messages, bankability is very much apart of that. In short, meaningful (indie) films and commercial success should not be mutually exclusive.

"I think we have to be commercially viable in order to reach the widest audience possible to effect the change, to create the awareness," Strauss says. "We probably have more of an independent spirit, but we still have to work in the mainstream marketplace. Since we also do documentaries, by virtue of the medium, it puts us more on the independent landscape. Mainstream Hollywood needs a diversified slate. I would argue that we could and should be part of that slate. And I think there's enough room for both blockbusters, high concept mainstream blockbusters, and movies that are a bit more thoughtful or deliberate but no less entertaining."

Because of its governing philosophy, Strauss says that Participant will continue to be open to independent filmmakers. "We are a great opportunity for independent filmmakers who have a story to tell, and I think we should be looked at as an appropriate door to knock on," he says. "They just have to be mindful of the fact that we have a specific mission, and if there are filmmakers, writers or actors with stories to tell that complement that mission, we are a great home for them. [It's about] having an opportunity to have a place to set up a project and ultimately make a movie or a doc that [filmmakers] are passionate

about that wouldn't otherwise happen because the studio would not want to take on the burden of developing and releasing a film that is more challenging than others."

Jeff Skoll adds, "The world of independent film is a little bit freer of that kind of commercial, mass-market influence that guide so many decisions for studios. I think from an economic standpoint, you also see these filmmakers being a little bit more financially responsible because oftentimes it is people doing this on their own nickel."

But before you can direct your humanist and entertaining script, show off your skills at maximizing a shoestring budget, or even have your project looked at, you'll need an agent. Almost all of the projects Participant looks at come from agents, managers, or film festivals, and they tend to be in the beginning stages of pre-production. Unsolicited submissions are not accepted. The selection process is rigorous, says Chris Adams, Participant's chief vision officer and senior vice president of business development. The submitted project is looked at first by the selection committee, which composed the company's board of advisors. After that, it goes through creative, business, and marketing—in that order. Lastly, it goes to Jeff Skoll who makes the ultimate decision based on the quality of the project and its social significance. Adams walks through the checklist: "The first step is accessing the material for its compliance with our mandate. Is it on point, meaning does it have social relevance? Does it have commercial viability? The point is to identify the pictures on the creative side. It's all about the story. Then to analyze them ferociously because we want to see how the picture is being packaged. Our bottom line: we have two. We want a social return and a financial return on our investment."

To ensure some of Participant's films a wide release, the company has teamed up with distribution partners like Warner Bros. and IFC Films. Adams says that the studios will always be more concerned with the financial aspect, and that's OK. "We like to make money, and we don't like to lose money, but our partner is always about money," he says. "We are celebratory of making money but we are more happy to see that the films are being seen."



Linda Cardellini and Donald Sutherland star in Participant Productions's *American Gun*, written and directed by Aric Avelino, to be released by IFC (Sam Emerson)

One film that managed to jump through all the selection hoops is *American Gun*, a mosaic of stories about how the proliferation of guns in the country affect different lives, written and directed by first-timer Aric Avelino. Avelino and his producer Ted Kroeber had been shopping the script around for three years when Avelino met Skoll at a Sundance industry party in 2003. The two talked about film and each other's pet projects. Avelino says he was shocked at how much of a film buff Skoll is. "If you don't know who Jeff Skoll is, he's just the eBay guy," Avelino says. "[But] he is just so enthusiastic about film." When Avelino returned to Los Angeles, he received a call from Participant to work on a rewrite for another film. After that came another call asking to see the script for *American Gun*, and shortly after a deal was struck. IFC Films will distribute the film.

Before meeting up with Skoll, Avelino says the film's controversial subject matter (one storyline is about the aftermath of a high school shooting) is what turned a lot of studio execs away from the project, despite interest from and eventual participation by a list of venerable actors, including Donald Sutherland, Forest Whitaker, Linda Cardellini, and Marcia Gay Harden. "A lot of people wanted to commercialize it," Avelino says. "I think people were really taken aback by the boldness of the writing. We get a lot of 'we love the script, but we can't do it here. It's just too tough.' They were concerned with the budget, and that we couldn't do it on the budget we had."

Making it an even tougher sell to Hollywood was that Avelino had never directed a full-length film before. The 27-year-old film-

maker got his BA in theater arts from the Loyola Marymount University in Los Angeles, but not having comparable industry experience proved to be a setback until Participant came along. "It takes a special kind of company to say, 'Look, we know this is your first film. You are going to work this crazy ridiculous schedule. But we believe that you can do it.' And they did. They left me alone," Avelino says.

Shooting began in July 2003, with a breakneck schedule of 24 days over five weeks and is now in post-production. If everything goes as planned, *American Gun* will be the first Participant-produced film to go public, which Avelino hopes will happen through festivals initially. "I think this is definitely a festival film—it's not like we are going to open in thousands of theaters," he says. "So it's important for people to see the film, talk about it. Hopefully more people will see it if they respond to the film festivals."

For now, Participant's fortune still remains unclear, and at a time when everyone wants to be part of the glamour that is Hollywood, legitimacy doesn't come easy to an upstart production company headed by an ex-dot-com billionaire with well-meaning intentions. Skoll is humble but optimistic about the future success of his company. "I think Hollywood has a history of people who've been successful in traditional business and coming to town and just failing miserably," he says. "Most industry people are skeptical when somebody comes here to make movies or to pursue an agenda of some kind, as I am. Credibility can only come with time and actual success—of actually doing good films and good projects. Hopefully we are on our way." ★

Roger Corman's How-To

An unusual manual for tomorrow's filmmakers

By Lisa Selin Davis

Roger Corman, progenitor of the American B-movie and a kind of walking, solo "Star Search"/"American Idol" for the film industry, is the perfect spokesperson for the Chamberlain Bros. International Student Film Festival. Having launched the careers of everyone from Martin Scorsese to Francis Ford Coppola to John Sayles, James Cameron, Peter Bogdanovich and Jonathan Demme, Corman is still, at age 79, on the prowl for raw film talent. This is the man you want to see your work when you come out of film school, and, if your film is ever lucky enough to be chosen by the Chamberlain Bros. panelists for what will from now on be an annual student festival (Corman is not involved in the selection process), he'll be watching. Maybe he'll even throw you a small directing job—something to shoot in the second-unit, say.

But the Chamberlain Bros. International Student Film Festival which ran from March 31 to April 2, offers something besides Corman's presence. Not only was the festival an actual event—three nights during which six chosen films were screened theatrically, and, at the premiere, introduced by Corman—but it's also a book. With an introduction by Corman and short chapters and interviews with the filmmakers conducted by Kimberley Brown, the book (Chamberlain Bros., \$14.95) includes a DVD of all six films. This means, for the filmmakers, that their films will be distributed widely, if not theatrically, and that any number of industry professionals and aspiring filmmakers will have a chance to review their work.

If you're neither an agent nor a talent scout—those who have to scour the streets and film schools searching for new faces and new ideas—you might wonder

how this book/DVD might help you in your own quest to become a filmmaker. First of all, it shows you what film executives and talent evaluators are looking for. Corman has professed admiration for each of the films; you'll be able to see just what it is he looks for in terms of "early talent." And perhaps watching the best six out of 500 entries might give you just the ego boost you need. Maybe you'll look at these works and say, "I can do better than that."

Secondly, the book offers a meditation on the value of film school itself. Other than the chance to enter student film contests such as this one, why spend as much money on tuition as you could on a film of your own? Why enter the industry via the Corman method—by starting as a messenger boy on the Fox lot? (He did, however, attend Beverly Hills High School with the children of a Fox VP.) There are more than 10,000 students graduating from film schools each year, he writes, and only jobs for a few of them, yet it costs the same as law school or medical school (degrees that will lead to actual employment). Isn't there an easier, less expensive and time-consuming way?

Corman says it's worth the cash for several reasons. The studio system has changed, and it's not so easy to start out in the mailroom and make your way to president these days. You need a film, he says, to work as a "very expensive calling card." You get connections (and, if you find yourself at one of the big three film schools—USC, UCLA or NYU—chances are industry folks will show up at

the screenings). You get access to equipment and to cast and crew. And, most importantly, you are immersed in the depth and breadth of film history, learning from the great filmmakers who came before you.

This last point might puzzle some who view the films in this collection or who read their interviews. The filmmakers don't seem to be as influenced by the historical greats as they do by recent cinematic sensations. Observe this sample of the filmmakers' favorite films: *The Karate Kid* (1984), *Wonder Boys* (2000), *E.T. The Extra Terrestrial* (1982), *This Is Spinal Tap* (1984), *Election* (1999), *Magnolia* (1999), *The Lord of the Rings* (2001), *The Matrix* (1999), *The Passion of the Christ* (2004), *American Beauty* (1999), and *Bull Durham* (1988). Yes, one filmmaker cites *Bull Durham* as one of the films most important to her. The only older films mentioned are *The Graduate* (1967), *Casablanca* (1942), and *Rear Window* (1954), and the filmmakers cite influences such as Cameron Crowe and Paul Thomas Anderson. What kind



of education are they getting that they are not affected by the films that inspired their favorite directors?

"You're always influenced by the generation that comes before you," explains Corman, "but you should be aware of and influenced by the entire history of films. It's like a writer not mentioning Shakespeare as an influence."

The DVD includes *Toxin*, a thriller by undergraduate Chris Folkens; *Zeke*, a comedy by Dana Buning about a neutered cat taking revenge on its owner; *The Reunion*, Ben Epstein's romantic comedy about a fateful meeting between a businesswoman and the homeless man who used to be her boyfriend; *The Plunge*, another romantic comedy, by Todd Schulman, about a man working up the courage to propose; and the best of the American crop, *Perils in Nude Modeling*, a dark comedy about a Nazi-esque drawing professor and the student and model who fall in love despite him, by Scott Rice.

The best film of the group, *Enlightenment*, is by Thai filmmaker Tanon Sattarujawong (whose presence legitimizes the title of "international film festival"), who cites such influences as the great Iranian filmmaker Abbas Kiarostami, and Edward Yang, director of *Yi Yi* (2000).

Corman is not bothered by what some in the audience saw as the lack of originality or vision in the films. In fact, Corman said he found the proliferation of comedies refreshing. "There's an attempt generally to be Ingmar Bergman," he said of young filmmakers. His remark begs the question: Would you rather see another generation of *Autumn Sonata*, or would you like a new crop of *Die Hard* derivatives? But Corman is the foremost expert on spotting inchoate talent. How many among us would have known from their early work that Sayles and Demme and Scorsese were capable of cinematic greatness?

Of course, books on Sayles and Demme and Scorsese would be of interest to us because these directors have already accomplished so much. Most of these youngsters have not yet been around the block and are not yet in a

position to reflect on the long journeys of their careers. But for students just starting out, it might be a useful manual for what lies ahead or for what you're getting yourself into if you do sign up for film school.

The book is also a boon to some of the lesser-known film schools. One film came out of Florida State University, and another one from the University of Illinois at Urbana/Champaign (a school with no actual film program), which proves that it's an equal opportunity festival and not just a feeder from the big three straight into the industry.

The reason Corman didn't attend film school all those years ago is simple: he didn't know they existed. Now that there are more than 20 film programs all over the country, he says if he had to do it all over again, he'd go to film school. We're living in what Corman says is probably the hardest time for independent filmmakers in his 50-plus years in the industry. "I can't hit a home run," he said, referring to the difficulty of getting theatrical releases in this time of corporate consolidation, when the theaters and studios, even the concessions stands, are all in handshaking agreements at the highest level, making it nearly impossible for the independents to squeeze in.

The Chamberlain Bros. International Film Festival book/DVD does give these kids a chance to at least hit a single. It also makes the experience of reading about filmmaking less academic and more hands-on—you can read about the process of filmmaking, and then actually watch the film discussed. It's a trend that's growing and not just a gimmick. If anything, perhaps it will get more people to read, and it represents a potential revolution in film distribution, albeit it a quiet one.

The book and DVD purport to offer films from "today's hottest young directors," a claim that's a good deal misleading. What they mean, I think, is, "tomorrow's hottest young directors." Perhaps we'll see their names on the next Roger Corman picture. "I wouldn't give them a feature to direct," he says. "But I'd trust them with something small." ★

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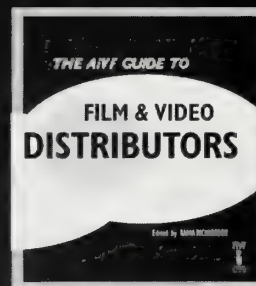
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FESTIVALS

By Bo Mehrad

Lists do not constitute an endorsement. We recommend that you contact the festival directly before sending cassettes, as details may change after the magazine goes to press. Deadline: 1st of the month two months prior to cover date (e.g., Sept. 1st for Nov. issue). Include festival dates, categories, prizes, entry fees, deadlines, formats & contact info. Send to: festivals@aivf.org

DOMESTIC

ANGELUS AWARDS STUDENT FILM FESTIVAL

Oct. 23, CA. Deadline: July 1. College/Film School competition takes place at the DGA in California. Cats: feature, doc, short, animation, student. Formats: 1/2", 3/4", S-VHS, DVD. Preview on VHS, 3/4" (NTSC only). Entry Fee: \$25. Contact: Monika Moreno; (800) 874-0999; fax: 874-1168; info@angelus.org; www.angelus.org.

ANNAPOLIS FILM FESTIVAL

Nov. 11-14, MD. Deadline: June 3; June 24; July 8 (final). A four-day fest showcasing independent films & documentaries produced by local & nat'l filmmakers. Its mission is to "celebrate the capacity of independent film to move us, teach us & entertain us." Cats: feature, doc, short, animation. Formats: 35mm, Beta SP, DV, DVD. Preview on VHS or DVD. Entry Fee: \$25-\$50. Contact: Festival; (410) 263-2388; fax: 263-2629; info@annapolisfilmfestival.com; www.annapolisfilmfestival.com.

ASPEN FILMFEST

Sept. 28-Oct. 2, CO. Deadline: July 8. With an emphasis on independent productions from around the world, this fall fest champions "filmmaking at its finest". Founded: 1979. Cats: feature, doc, family, children, animation. Awards: Non-Competitive. Formats: 16mm, 35mm, Beta SP, U-matic, DigiBeta. Preview on VHS (NTSC or PAL) or DVD. Entry Fee: \$35. Contact: Laura Thielen; (970) 925-6882; fax: 925-1967; filmfest@aspenfilm.org; www.aspenfilm.org.

AUSTIN FILM FESTIVAL

Oct. 20-27, TX.

Deadline: June 15; July 15 (final). Fest is dedicated to the writer as the heart of the creative process of filmmaking & uncovers outstanding, emerging writers, fostering their development through panels, workshops & master classes conducted by professionals. Founded: 1994. Cats: feature, short, student, script. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, DigiBeta, Beta SP. Preview on VHS or DVD. Entry Fee: \$40; \$50 (final). Contact: Lisa Albracht; (800) 310-FEST/ (512) 478-4795; fax: 478-6205; film@austinfilmfestival.com; www.austinfilmfestival.com.

AUSTIN GAY & LESBIAN INT'L FILM FESTIVAL

Sept. 31-Oct. 8, TX. Deadline: June 2. Fest is the oldest & largest fest in the Southwest. AGLIFF continues its mission to "exhibit high-quality gay & lesbian, bisexual & transgender films & videos that enlighten, educate & entertain all communities." Founded: 1986. Cats: Feature, Short, Children, Doc, Experimental, Animation. Formats: 35mm, 1/2", DV, DVD. Preview on VHS or DVD. Entry Fee: None. Contact: Mo Ratel; (512) 302-9889; fax: 302-1088; film@agliff.org; www.agliff.org.

BETHEL FILM FESTIVAL

Oct. 25-30, NY. Deadline: May 31; July 15 (final). Six days & nights of independent & int'l film that will be shown on multiple, concurrent screens at The Bethel Cinema, an established filmgoer mecca in affluent Fairfield County. Cats: feature, doc, short, student, animation. Awards: Cash & In-kind prizes. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, Beta SP, HD, DV Cam. Preview on VHS or DVD. Entry Fee: \$20-\$60. Contact: Carol Spiegel; (203) 790-4321;

info@bethelfilmfestival.com; www.bethelfilmfestival.com.

CINEKINK NYC

Oct. 18-23, NY. Deadline: May 20; July 1 (final). Fest explores "a wide diversity of alternative sexuality incl. - but by no means limited to - S/M, leather & fetish, bondage & discipline, dominance & submission, roleplay, swinging, polyamory & non-monogamy, & gender bending". Cats: feature, doc, short, experimental, animation, any style or genre, music video. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, Beta SP, DVD, 1/2", Super 8. Preview on VHS or DVD. Entry Fee: \$20; \$30 (final). Contact: Festival; info@cinetkink.com; www.cinetkink.com.

COLUMBUS INT'L FILM & VIDEO FESTIVAL

Mid-November, OH. Deadline: July 1. Competitive fest w/ screenings of selected winners, founded in 1952, is one of the oldest non-theatrical showcases in country. Founded: 1952. Cats: feature, doc, experimental, short, animation, any style or genre, student, youth media, TV. Formats: CD-ROM, 1/2", DVD. Preview on VHS or DVD. Entry Fee: \$75 & up (professionals); \$35-\$50 (students). Contact: Judy Chalker; (614) 444-7460; fax: same; info@chrisawards.org; www.chrisawards.org.

CONEY ISLAND FILM FESTIVAL

Sept. 30-Oct. 2, NY. Deadline: May 6; July 1 (final). Fest's mission is to raise funds for the non-profit arts organization Coney Island USA & to present a fun & unique program of films at the legendary Sideshows by the Seashore & Coney Island Museum venues. Cats: feature, doc, short, animation, experimental,

music video. Formats: DV, 16mm, Super 8, 35mm. Preview on VHS, DVD or Mini-DV. Entry Fee: \$20; \$25 (final). Contact: Festival; info@coneyislandfilmfestival.com; www.coneyislandfilmfestival.com.

DUMBO SHORT FILM & VIDEO FESTIVAL, Oct. 14-16, NY. Deadline: June 1; Aug. 1 (final). Film & video event is part of the annual D.U.M.B.O. Art Under the Bridge Festival & is designed to showcase the work of independent & experimental film & videomakers living in NYC's five boroughs. Works must be 30 min. or less. Founded: 1996. Cats: short, any style or genre. Formats: 16mm, 1/2", Mini-DV, DVD, Beta SP. Preview on VHS. Entry Fee: \$15; \$25 (final). Contact: D.U.M.B.O. Arts Center; (718) 694-0831; mail@dumbartscenter.org; www.dumbartscenter.org.

EUREKA INT'L FILM FESTIVAL, Oct. 22-30, NY. Deadline: May 20; June 17. Festival showcases political & socially conscious films by filmmakers from all over the world, presenting views that span the political spectrum. Fest celebrates the "freedom of expression" & will feature documentaries, fictional works, animations & political humor. Founded: 2005. Cats: feature, doc, animation, short. Formats: 16mm, 35mm, Beta SP. Preview on VHS or DVD. Entry Fee: \$25 shorts; \$30 features. Contact: Festival; (212) 714-4617; info@eurekaiff.com; www.eurekaiff.com.

GREAT LAKES INDEPENDENT FILM FESTIVAL, Sept. 22-25, PA. Deadline: July 1. Annual fest will take place in the city of Erie, PA. Centrally located, Erie is only a short drive from the cities of Cleveland, Ohio, Buffalo, NY, & Pittsburgh, PA. Fest's goal is showcasing new independent films, recognizing outstanding filmmakers. Founded: 2002. Cats: feature, doc, short, animation, experimental. Formats: Beta SP, DVD. Preview on VHS (NTSC) or DVD. Entry Fee: \$45-\$85. Contact: Steve Opsanic; (814) 834-5069; fax: 734-5402; fest@greatlakesfilmfest.com; www.greatlakesfilmfest.com.

HAMPTONS INT'L FILM FESTIVAL, Oct. 19-23, NY. Deadline: May 10; June 7 (final). Now entering its 12th year, the fest offers diverse programming w/ breakout films by new

directors, premieres by established filmmakers, panel discussions, special events w/ guests from the industry & awards worth over \$200,000. Founded: 1993. Cats: feature, short, doc, world cinema, films of conflict & resolution, student, youth media, family, children. Formats: 35mm, Beta SP, DigiBeta. Preview on VHS or DVD. Entry Fee: shorts \$35/\$50; features, docs \$50/\$75. Contact: HIFF; (212) 431-6292; fax: 431-5440; programming@hamptonsfest.org; www.hamptonsfest.org.

HARDACRE FILM FESTIVAL, Aug. 5-6, IA. Deadline: June 7. Fest recognizes excellence in independent cinema, w/ screenings at the art-deco Hardacre Theatre. Founded: 1997. Cats: Feature, Doc, Short, Animation, Experimental, Foreign, Student. Formats: 16mm, 35mm, DV, DVD. Preview on VHS. Entry Fee: \$15 (shorts under 60 min.); \$25 (features). Contact: Festival; (563) 886-2175; fax: 886-2213; director@hardacrefilmfestival.com; www.hardacrefilmfestival.com.

HAWAII INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL, 20-30, HI. Deadline: July 1. Annual fest is dedicated to promoting cross-cultural understanding among peoples of Asia, N. America & the Pacific region through the presentation of features, docs & shorts dealing w/ relevant subject matter. In the past, fest has presented over 200 films across six islands to over 65,000 people. Founded: 1980. Cats: feature, doc, short. Formats: 35mm, Beta SP. Entry Fee: \$35; \$50 (final). Contact: Anderson Le-ale@hiff.org, 1001 Bishop St. ASB Tower, Suite 745, Honolulu, HI 96813; 808-528-3456; fax: 808-528-1410; info@hiff.org; www.hiff.org

HIP-HOP ODYSSEY INT'L FILM FESTIVAL (H2O), Nov. 13-19, NY. Deadline: June 1; July 15 (final). Fest showcases "the best of American & Int'l independent Hip-Hop cinema." The fest's mission is to create "cultural sustainability & industry longevity by supporting the use of Hip-Hop culture as a tool for social awareness & youth empowerment". Cats: youth media, feature, doc, short, animation, experimental, PSA, music video. Entry Fee: \$15-\$30. Contact: Stacey L'Air Lee, Programming Director; (212) 500-5970; fax: 300-4895; stacey@hiphopassociation.org; www.h2oiff.org.

IDA / DAVID L. WOLPER STUDENT AWARDS, Dec. 9, CA. Deadline: June 10. Int'l Doc Association student documentary achievement award. Films & videos must be produced by registered, matriculating students. The winning entry will be shown at IDA's annual DocuFest, a day long screening. Four Merit winners will be selected, but receive no cash prize. Cats: student, doc. Awards: \$1,000 cash prize, plus \$1,000 certificate toward Eastman Kodak motion picture film.. Formats: Any format is eligible, for initial judging, 1/2" NTSC format is preferred.. Preview on VHS or DVD. Entry Fee: \$45. Contact: Festival; (213) 534-3600 ext. 7438; fax: 534-3610; tracie@documentary.org; www.documentary.org.

IMAGEOUT: THE ROCHESTER LESBIAN & GAY FILM & VIDEO FESTIVAL, October 7-16, NY. Deadline: July 1. Fest is "an exciting & important venue for lesbian, gay, & queer film- & videomakers." Last yr. fest screened over 40 programs, incl. more than 120 films & videos. Also features "Third Coast" call, highlighting filmmakers from the U.S. & Canada who live w/in a 200-mile radius of the Great Lakes & St. Lawrence Seaway. Founded: 1993. Cats: feature, doc, short, experimental, animation, youth media, music video, family. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, 1/2", Beta SP, DVD. Preview on VHS or DVD. Entry Fee: \$10. Contact: Festival; (585) 271-2640; fax: 271-3798; imageout@rochester.rr.com; www.imageout.org.

JACKSON HOLE WILDLIFE FILM FESTIVAL, Sept. 19-24, WY. Deadline: June 1. Fest seeks films dealing w/ natural history, wildlife, conservation & related topics. Entries must have been completed w/in the past two years. Cats: natural history programming, doc. Formats: HD, DigiBeta, Beta SP, DVD. Preview on VHS. Entry Fee: \$50-200. Contact: Laura Johnson; (307) 733-7016; fax: 733-7376; info@jhfestival.org; www.jhfestival.org.

LONG ISLAND GAY & LESBIAN FILM FESTIVAL, November 11-17, NY. Deadline: July 1; Aug. 15 (final). Entry Fee: \$15; \$25 (final). Contact: Stephen Flynn; (631) 547-6650; fax: 547-6651; info@liglff.org; www.liglff.org.

LOS ANGELES INT'L SHORT FILM FESTIVAL (LA SHORTS FEST), Sept. 7-13, CA. Deadline: May 17; June 17 (final). Fest dubs itself "the largest short film fest in the world.," seeks Shorts, Features & Screenplays shorts (under 40 min.) & long shorts (40-60 min.), as well as feature-length works by directors who have previously completed a short film in their career. Founded: 1997. Cats: Short, Animation, Doc, Experimental, any style or genre, feature. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, Beta SP, DigiBeta. Preview on VHS or DVD. Entry Fee: \$45-\$70. Contact: Robert Arentz, Founder & Festival Director; (323) 851-9100; info@lashortsfest.com; www.lashortsfest.com.

MANHATTAN SHORT FILM FESTIVAL, Sept. 16-25, NY. Deadline: June 30 (scripts); July 31. Once a yr. thousands of New Yorkers gather inside Union Square Park to watch short films. The fest will screen in over 30 states across the country. Viewers will not only get the chance to view the next generation of filmmakers but vote on them as well. Winner of the fest will be bought into a feature film as director & that film will be distributed to the very same venues that voted for the director. Founded: 1998. Cats: short, any style or genre, script. Formats: DigiBeta. Preview on VHS (NTSC/PAL). Entry Fee: \$35; \$25 (scripts). Contact: Nicholas Mason; (201) 969-8049; info@msfilmfest.com; www.msfilmfest.com.

MILL VALLEY FILM & VIDEO FESTIVAL, Oct. 6-16, CA. Deadline: April 1; June 30 (final). Invitational, noncompetitive fest screens films of all genres & lengths & has become a premiere West Coast event, bringing new & innovative works to Northern California audiences. Premieres & new works emphasized. Cats: Feature, Doc, Short, Interactive, Children, Animation, Experimental. Awards: Audience & Jury awards for shorts. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, Beta SP. Preview on VHS. Entry Fee: \$25; \$30 (final). Contact: Zoe Elton; (415) 383-5256; fax: 383-8606; info@cafilm.org; www.cafilm.org.

NEUSE RIVER FOUNDATION ENVIRONMENTAL FILM FESTIVAL, Oct. 21-22, NC. Deadline: July 1. Fest features films that have water & it's relationship to the environment as a central theme. Founded: 2005. Cats: any style or

genre, feature, doc, short, animation, experimental. Formats: DVD. Preview on VHS/DVD. Entry Fee: None. Contact: Neuse River Foundation; (919) 856-1180; fax: 839-0767; jackie.nrf@att.net; www.neuseriver.org.

NEW HAMPSHIRE FILM EXPO, Oct. 14-16, NH. Deadline: July 1; Aug. 1 (final). NHFX is a community-inclusive event intended to enhance the arts & tourism aspects of NH. This is the state's largest film event, incl.: independent & student film screenings, tradeshow, young filmmaker's workshops & others. Cats: feature, doc, short, animation, student, any style or genre, script. Awards: Best: Feature, Drama Short, Comedy Short, Doc, Animation, Student. Formats: Beta SP, DVD, Mini-DV, VHS-NTSC, 1/2". Preview on VHS, Mini-DV or DVD. Entry Fee: \$20-\$45. Contact: NHFX; (603) 647-NHFX (6439); info@nhfx.com; www.nhfx.com.

NEW JERSEY FILMMAKERS FESTIVAL, TBA, NJ. Deadline: June 1. Fest accepts films from New Jersey filmmakers. Run by underground & independent filmmakers dedicated to supporting & encouraging creative filmmaking. Cats: doc, feature, short, animation, experimental, music video, any style or genre. Formats: 16mm, 1/2", Beta SP, Super 8. Preview on VHS or DVD. Entry Fee: None. Contact: c/o Paul Holgerson; (732) 545-5864; paulholgerson@hotmail.com.

NEW YORK FILM FESTIVAL, Sept. 23-Oct. 9, NY. Deadline: July 16. The New York Film Festival is an annual fest which aims to demonstrate the development of int'l film art & contemporary trends in content, form & style. The Festival is non-competitive. No prizes are awarded. As a special event of the Festival, Views from the Avant-Garde takes place in the Walter Reade Theater at Lincoln Center, a program of non-narrative experimental films of any length demonstrating innovative cinematic technique. Works can originally be shot on video or film, but you must have a 16mm or 35mm print for actual fest exhibition. Founded: 1962. Cats: feature, doc, short, experimental, animation, student, any style or genre. Formats: 35mm, 16mm. Preview on VHS, DVD or Print. Entry Fee: None. Contact: Sara Bensman; (212) 875-5638; fax: (212) 875-5636; festival@film-linc.com; www.filmlinc.com.

OHIO INDEPENDENT FILM FESTIVAL, Nov., OH. Deadline: March 1; May 1; June 10 (Final). Fest only accepts submissions w/out theatrical distribution & is programmed 100% from those submissions. Founded: 1994. Cats: any style or genre, feature, short, doc, animation, experimental. Formats: 16mm, S-8, 1/2", super 8, Beta SP. Preview on VHS or DVD. Entry Fee: \$20 (shorts under 15 min.); \$35 (15 min. & over); late fees are doubled; screenplays: \$40; \$60 (late). Contact: Annetta Marion & Bernadette Gillota; (216) 651-7315; fax: (216) 651-7317; ohioindiefilmfest@juno.com; www.ohiofilms.com.

OJAI FILM FESTIVAL, Oct. 20-23, CA. Deadline: June 1; July 1 (final). Theme: "Enriching the Human Spirit Through Film." Films & videos on all subjects in any genre are welcomed. Cats: feature, doc, short, animation, student, any style or genre. Formats: 35mm, Beta SP, Mini-DV, DV Cam. Preview on VHS (NTSC), DVD. Entry Fee: \$25-\$45. Contact: Steve Grumette, Artistic Director; (805) 649-4000; filmfestival@ojai.net; www.ojaifilmfestival.org.

PORT TOWNSEND FILM FESTIVAL, Sept. 23-25, WA. Deadline: April 30; May 30; June 15. Festival aims to showcase independent filmmakers & films to provide creative activity for the public along w/ periodic classes & seminars. The emphasis is on providing a creative experience & promoting films. Founded: 2000. Cats: feature, doc, short, animation. Formats: S-VHS, Beta SP, 35mm. Preview on VHS (PAL, NTSC) or DVD. Entry Fee: \$15-\$45. Contact: PTF; (360) 379-1333 fax: 379-3996; info@ptfilmfest.com; www.ptfilmfest.com.

PUTNAM COUNTY FILM & VIDEO FESTIVAL, Oct. 1-2, NY. Deadline: July 16. This regional film/video fest celebrates community media-making. Includes Gala Awards Ceremony & Dinner. Filmmakers must reside in NY State or project must have a strong connection to NY. Founded: 2001. Cats: trailers, works-in-progress, feature, doc, short, any style or genre, music video, animation, experimental, student. Formats: DV, Beta SP, Mini-DV, DVD, Betacam, DVCAM. Preview on VHS. Entry Fee: \$25 under 59 min.; \$35 over 60 min.. Contact: Maryann Arrien, Festival

Director; (845) 528-7420; fax: (same); maryann@putnamvalleyarts.com; www.putnamvalleyarts.com.

QUITTAPAHILLA FILM FESTIVAL, Sept. 30-Oct. 2, PA. Deadline: July 1. Set in the Central Pennsylvania valley, just 20 min. from Hershey, PA. Festival holds screenings at the historic Allen Theatre, w/ additional screenings in the Lebanon Valley College lawns. Founded: 2004. Cats: feature, doc, short. Awards: Cash Prizes. Formats: 16mm, 35mm, DVD, Beta. Preview on VHS or DVD. Entry Fee: \$25. Contact: Jeff Ritchie/Skip Ebert; (717) 964-2222; todd.klick@clipper magazine.com; www.qfilms.org.

REELING: CHICAGO LESBIAN & GAY INT'L FILM FESTIVAL, Nov. 3-10, IL. Deadline: July 1; July 15. Annual fest seeks wide variety of lesbian, gay, bisexual, & transgendered films & videos for second oldest fest of its kind in the world. All genres & lengths accepted. Founded: 1981. Cats: Any style or genre, Feature, Experimental, Animation, Short, doc. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, Beta SP, DVD, 1/2", Mini-DV. Preview on VHS. Entry Fee: \$15-\$25. Contact: c/o Chicago Filmmakers; (773) 293-1447; fax: 293-0575; reeling@chicagofilmmakers.org; www.chicagofilmmakers.org.

REHOBOTH BEACH INDEPENDENT FILM FESTIVAL, Nov. 9-13, DE. Deadline: June 19; July 15 (final). Fourth annual fest celebrates independent & foreign cinema in a picturesque coastal resort setting. Approx. 100 entries will be selected for diverse programming in eight theaters. No repeat entries. Founded: 1998. Cats: feature, doc, animation, experimental, children, short, gay & lesbian, student. Formats: 35mm, Beta SP, DVD, 1/2". Preview on VHS (NTSC, PAL) or DVD. Entry Fee: \$20; \$25 (final). Contact: David Gold; (302) 645-9095; fax: 645-9460; david@rehobothfilm.com; www.rehobothfilm.com.

ROCKY MOUNTAIN WOMEN'S FILM FESTIVAL, Nov. 4-6, CO. Deadline: June 30. Fest celebrates "the drive, spirit & diversity of women" Cats: Feature, Doc, Short, Animation. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, 3/4", 1/2". Preview on VHS. Entry Fee: \$25. Contact: Linda Broker; (719) 226-0450;

fax: 579-5395; linda@rmwfilmfest.org; www.rmwfilmfest.org.

ROUTE 66 FILM FESTIVAL, Sept. 17-18, IL. Deadline: July 15. Fest seeks works that "involve some kind of journey" (physical, emotional, intellectual). Cats: feature, short, experimental. Awards: Awards for judges' choice, best of fest, audience favorite. Formats: 1/2", DVD. Preview on VHS. Entry Fee: \$20 (features); \$10 (shorts, under 20 min.). Contact: Linda McElroy at linmcelroy@aol.com; www.route66filmfestival.com.

SAN DIEGO FILM FESTIVAL, Sept. 21-25, CA. Deadline: June 1; July 1 (final). Cats: feature, doc, short, any style or genre. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, Beta SP, 1/2", DVD. Preview on VHS (NTSC), DVD. Entry Fee: \$35 (features/docs); \$25 (shorts); \$45 (features final); \$35 (shorts final). Contact: San Diego Film Foundation; (619) 582-2368; fax: 286-8324; info@sdff.org; www.sdff.org.

SCREAMFEST HORROR FILM & SCREENPLAY COMPETITION, October 14-23, CA. Deadline: July 15; Aug. 15. Fest is a mix of films, sketch comedy, & contests for best costume & loudest shriek. Festivities take place at the Vogue Theatre in Hollywood. Cats: feature, short, animation, script. Entry Fee: features \$40, shorts \$30 & screenplays \$35. Contact: Rachel Belofsky, festival producer; (310) 358-3273; fax: 358-3272; screamfestla@aol.com; www.screamfestla.com.

SEATTLE LESBIAN & GAY FILM FESTIVAL, Oct. 14-23, WA. Deadline: June 1; July 1 (final). The Pacific Northwest's premier queer film fest, committed to screening the best in lesbian, gay, bisexual & transgender film/video. Produced by Three Dollar Bill Cinema, whose mission is to provide community access to queer cinema & a venue for queer filmmakers to show their work. Founded: 1995. Cats: Feature, Short, Experimental, doc, animation. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, 1/2", Beta SP. Preview on VHS or DVD. Entry Fee: \$10; \$15 (final). Contact: Jason Plourde; (206) 323-4274; fax: 323-4275; programming@seattlequeerfilm.com; www.seattlequeerfilm.com.

SHRIEKFEST-THE LOS ANGELES INT'L HORROR FILM FESTIVAL, Oct. 11-12, CA. Deadline: March 12; May 28; June 25 (final).

Shriekfest, the annual Los Angeles Horror Film Festival is held at Raleigh Studios in Hollywood. The fest focuses on the horror film genre & the work of young filmmakers (18 & under). The fest "screens the best independent horror films of the year." Cats: feature, doc (about the horror genre), short, script, Young Filmmaker (under 18), youth media. Entry Fee: \$20-\$55. Contact: Shriekfest Film Festival; Shriekfest@aol.com; www.shriekfest.com.

STARZ DENVER INT'L FILM FESTIVAL, Nov. 10-20, CO. Deadline: July 15. Annual invitational expo of film presents approx. 200 films over 11 days & plays host to more than 125 film artists. Founded: 1978. Cats: feature, doc, animation, experimental, children, short, family, student. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, video. Preview on VHS (NTSC/PAL) or DVD. Entry Fee: \$20 (students); \$35. Contact: Denver Film Society; (303) 595-3456; fax: 595-0956; dfs@denverfilm.org; www.denverfilm.org.

TAMPA INT'L LESBIAN & GAY FILM AND VIDEO FESTIVAL, October 6-16, FL. Deadline: July 2. The Fest considers all genres of any length by, about & of interest to lesbians & gay men. Fest is "committed to presenting culturally inclusive & diverse programs" of video & film. Founded: 1991. Cats: Gay/Lesbian, Any style or genre, feature, doc, short. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, Beta, DVD. Preview on VHS or DVD. Entry Fee: \$10 shorts; \$20 features. Contact: Mariruth Kennedy; (813) 785-0292; fax: 875-7124; mxkennedy@aol.com; www.tiglff.com.

TELLURIDE FILM FESTIVAL, Sept. 2-5, CO. Deadline: May 1; July 15 (final). Annual fest, held in a Colorado mountain town, is a Labor Day weekend celebration commemorating the art of filmmaking: honoring the great masters of cinema, discovering the rare & unknown, bringing new works by the world's greatest directors. Cats: feature, short, student, any style or genre, doc, experimental. Awards: None. Formats: 16mm, 35mm, 3/4", 1/2", S-VHS, Beta, Beta SP, DigiBeta, Hi8, DV, DVD. Preview on VHS or DVD. Entry Fee: \$35 (19 min. or less); \$55 (20-39 min.); \$75 (40-59 min.); \$95 (60 min. & over); \$25 (student films). Contact: Bill Pence / Tom Luddy; (603) 433-9202; fax: 433-9206;

mail@telluridefilmfestival.org; www.telluridefilmfestival.org.

TULSA OVERGROUND FILM FESTIVAL, Aug. 19-21, OK. Deadline: July 18. Designed to challenge, inspire, & ultimately showcase Oklahoma filmmakers, the Tulsa Overground emphasizes the unique characters, experiences, & locations that Oklahoma has to offer. Works must not be longer than 20 min. Cats: feature, doc, short, animation, experimental, any style or genre. Formats: 1/2", Mini-DV, DVD. Preview on VHS or DVD. Entry Fee: \$15. Contact: Festival; (918) 585-1223; tulsaoverground@hotmail.com; www.tulsaoverground.com.

VERMONT INT'L FILM FESTIVAL, Oct. 12-16, VT. Deadline: July 1. Fest devoted to presenting images & issues for social change. Categories: War & Peace, Justice/Human Rights & the Environment. Cats: feature, doc, short, any style or genre. Formats: 35mm, Beta SP, 1/2", DVD. Preview on VHS or DVD. Entry Fee: \$25 (shorts, under 30 min.); \$45 (feature). Contact: VIFF; (802) 660-2600; fax: 860-9555; info@vtiff.org; www.vtiff.org.

WOODSTOCK FILM FESTIVAL, Oct. 13-17, NY. Deadline: May 15; June 28 (final). Annual nonprofit fest fosters an intimate, reciprocal relationship between indie filmmakers, industry reps & audience members held in "the most famous little town in the whole world". Celebrating new voices of indie film w/ seminars, workshops, concerts & parties. Cats: feature, doc, short, music video, animation, student. Formats: 35mm, Beta SP, DigiBeta. Preview on VHS. Entry Fee: \$25-\$50. Contact: Meira Blaustein; (845) 679-4265; info@woodstockfilmfestival.com; www.woodstockfilmfestival.com.

YOUNG PEOPLE'S FILM & VIDEO FESTIVAL, July, OR. Deadline: June 6. Young People's Film & Video Festival is an annual juried survey of outstanding work by K-12 students from the Northwest (OR, WA, ID, MT, UT, AK). A jury reviews entries & assembles a program for public presentation. Judges' Certificates are awarded. About 20 films & videos are selected each year. Entries must have been made w/in previous 2 yrs. Founded: 1975. Cats: Student, any style or

genre. Formats: 16mm, S-8, 3/4", 1/2", Hi8, CD-ROM, S-VHS, Super 8, DV, Mini-DV, DVD. Preview on VHS. Entry Fee: None. Contact: Kristin Konsterlie, Festival Coordinator; (503) 221-1156; fax: 294-0874; kristin@nwfilm.org; www.nwfilm.org.

INTERNATIONAL

ATHENS INT'L FILM FESTIVAL, Sept. 16-25, Greece. Deadline: July 15. This fest's aim is to reinforce the fest's character, as a cinematographic celebration, & to promote Athens, as a capital of young cinema lovers, where young & restless cinematography is adored. Cats: feature, doc, short, animation. Formats: 16mm, 35mm, Beta SP. Preview on VHS. Entry Fee: None. Contact: Athens Int'l Film Festival- "Opening Nights"; (011) 30 210 6061689; fax: 210 6014137; festival@pegasus.gr; www.aiff.gr.

BAJA CALIFORNIA FILM FESTIVAL, Oct. 26-30, Mexico. Deadline: June 30. Fest seeks works "which contribute to the progress of the motion picture, television & video arts & encourage the development of the industry throughout the world". Fest is organized by Lamia Foundation for Film Arts. Founded: 2004. Cats: feature, short, TV, experimental, animation, music video, doc, any style or genre. Formats: DVD, 35mm. Preview on DVD. Entry Fee: None. Contact: Festival; 011 664 630 09 40; direct@bajacaliforniafilmfest.org; www.bajacaliforniafilmfest.org.

BEIRUT CINEMA DAYS, Sept. 15-25, Lebanon. Deadline: June 15. A non-competitive Arab film fest that shows films from or about the Arab world. Founded: 2001. Cats: feature, doc, short, animation, experimental, any style or genre. Formats: 35mm, Beta SP, DVD. Preview on VHS or DVD. Entry Fee: None. Contact: Eliane Raheb, Hania Mroueh; 011 961 1 293212; beirutdc@inco.com.lb.

BORDEAUX INT'L FESTIVAL OF WOMEN IN CINEMA, Oct. 3-9, France. Deadline: June 15 (shorts), July 31 (features). This Festival is designed & catered to the women filmmakers. The Festival aims to bring together innovative films from women & to recognize the achievements of female filmmakers. Cats: feature, short. Formats: 35mm, Beta SP Pal. Preview on VHS. Entry Fee: None. Contact:

Festival Int'l du Cinema au Feminin; (011) 33 1 56 36 15 01; s.wiemann@cinemafeminin.com; www.cinemafeminin.com.

CINEKID, October 22-30, Netherlands. Deadline: July 1. Visited by more than 37,000 children & int'l professionals, this fest aims to kindle inspiration & love of film in children. Cats: feature, doc, short, animation. Formats: DVD, VHS, DigiBeta PAL, CD-ROM, 35mm, 70mm, 16mm, Beta SP. Preview on VHS, CD-ROM or DVD. Entry Fee: None.. Contact: Festival; 011 +31(0)20 531 78 90; fax: 011 +31(0)20 531 78 99; info@cinekid.nl; www.cinekid.nl.

FANTASTISK FILM FESTIVAL: LUND INT'L FILM FESTIVAL, Sept. 16-25, Sweden. Deadline: July 30. The only int'l film fest in Scandinavia totally devoted to the cinema of the fantastic: science-fiction, fantasy, horror, & thriller. Cats: feature, doc, short, animation. Formats: 16mm, 35mm, DV (PAL), Beta SP (PAL). Preview on VHS (PAL or NTSC) or DVD. Entry Fee: None (shorts have to pay their own freight). Contact: Mats-Ola Nilsson; 011 46 46 132 135; fax: 011 46 46 132 139; info@fff.se; www.fff.se.

FILM SOUTH ASIA, Sept. 27-Oct. 2, Nepal. Deadline: June 30. Fest, located in Kathmandu, offers both competitive & non-competitive cats for docs on South Asian subjects made after Jan. 1 of previous year. Full-length docs given preference. Selected films may tour South Asia & the world. Cats: doc. Formats: Beta SP, mini-DV, DV Cam. Preview on VHS or DVD. Entry Fee: None. Contact: Film South Asia; 011 977 1 542 544; fax: 977 1 541 196; fsa@himal association.org; www.himal association.org/fsa.

INTERFILM BERLIN-INT'L SHORT FILM FESTIVAL BERLIN, Nov. 1-6, Germany. Deadline: July 16. Fest is the int'l short film event of Berlin. Films & videos no longer than 20 min. are eligible. No limit for yr. of production. Founded: 1982. Cats: doc, short, animation, experimental, children. Awards: 15 prizes in various cats. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, Beta SP. Preview on VHS (PAL/SECAM/NTSC) or DVD. No fee. Contact: Heinz Hermanns; 011 49 30 693 29 59; fax: 49 30 693 29 59; festival@interfilm.de; www.interfilm.de.

INVIDEO, Nov. 9-13, Italy. Deadline: June 17. Formats: Beta SP, DVD. Preview on VHS. Entry Fee: None. Contact: A.I.A.C.E./INVIDEO; 011 39 2 761 153 94; fax: 752 801 19; info@mostrainvideo.com; www.mosrainvideo.com.

LES ECRANS DE L'AVEVENTURE/INT'L FESTIVAL OF ADVENTURE FILM, Oct. 14-16, France. Deadline: July 15. Held in Dijon, fest is a showcase for recent adventure-themed docs. Cats: doc, children. Formats: Beta SP (PAL). Preview on VHS (PAL, Secam) or DVD. Entry Fee: None. Contact: Cléo Poussier; 011 33 1 43 26 97 52; fax: 33 1 46 34 75 45; aventure@la-gilde.org.

LOCARNO INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL, August 3-13, Switzerland. Deadline: June 15. This major Swiss cultural/cinematic all-feature event, is known for its innovative programming & support of alternative visions from independent directors. Competition is reserved for full-length features in general, from those directed by new directors to those realized by more experienced filmmakers from all over the world. Entries must have been completed w/in previous yr. Preferences for all sections given to world or European premieres. Two representatives of each competition film are brought in by the Festival for 5 days. Founded: 1948. Cats: feature, doc, short, animation, experimental, student. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, Beta. Preview on VHS. Entry Fee: None. Contact: Irene Bignardi, Festival Director; 011 41 91 756 2121; fax: 41 91 756 2149; info@pardo.ch; www.pardo.ch.

LONDON FILM FESTIVAL, Oct. 19 - Nov. 3, UK. Deadline: July 15. Fest, run continuously since 1957, is Europe's largest non-competitive, invitational fest. 180 int'l features & 100 short films showcased. Entries must be UK premieres, produced w/in preceding 18 months. Fiction & doc works of all lengths & genres accepted. Founded: 1957. Cats: short, animation, feature, doc, any style or genre, children. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, 8mm, 3/4", super 8, 70mm. Preview on VHS. Entry Fee: None. Contact: Sarah Lutton; 011 44 20 7815 1322; fax: 44 20 7633 0786; sarah.lutton@bfi.org.uk; www.lff.org.uk.

MONTREAL WORLD FILM FESTIVAL, Aug. 25-Sept. 5, Canada. Deadline: June 23 (shorts); July 30 (Features). Large & int'l known fest boasts audiences of over 700,000 & programs hundreds of films. Features in competition must be prod in 12 months preceding fest, not released commercially outside of country of origin & not entered in any competitive int'l film fest (unreleased films given priority). Shorts must be 70mm or 35mm & must not exceed 15 min. Founded: 1977. Cats: feature, short, any style or genre. Formats: 35mm, 70mm, DVD, Video. Preview on VHS. Entry Fee: none. Contact: Serge Losique, Fest Dir.; (514) 848-3883; 848-9933; fax: 848-3886; info@ffm-montreal.org; www.ffm-montreal.org.

NETHERLANDS FILM FESTIVAL, Sept. 28-Oct. 7, The Netherlands. Deadline: June 15. Annual fest is a nat'l film fest & ONLY Dutch films can be entered. Fest has a small Foreign Affairs section, for which foreign films w/ a considerable Dutch aspect (actors, director, producers, subject, etc.) will be invited. Cats: feature, short, doc, TV. Preview on VHS. Entry Fee: None. Contact: Ellis Driessem; 011 31 30 230 3800; fax: 31 30 230 3801; hfm@filmfestival.nl; www.filmfestival.nl.

RAINDANCE FILM FESTIVAL, Sept. 28-Oct. 9, UK. Deadline: June 1; July 1 (final). The fest aims to "reflect the cultural, visual & narrative diversity of the int'l independent film-making community" & specializes in films by first-time directors. Cats: short, animation, experimental, doc, music video, feature. Formats: 35mm, DigiBeta, Beta SP, DV. Preview on VHS. Entry Fee: shorts: 15 pounds, features: 50 pounds; shorts (final): \$20 pounds, features (final): 75 pounds- all payments in Pounds Sterling. Contact: Festival; 011 44 171 287 3833; fax: 011 44 171 439 2243; festival@raindance.co.uk; www.raindance.co.uk.

SIENA INT'L SHORT FILM FESTIVAL, Nov. 18-26, Italy. Deadline: July 1. Fest, held in conjunction w/ Short Film Market, offering five competitions: fiction, experimental, doc, animated films & Italian Panorama. All films must be 30 min. or less & have been produced in the last 2 years. No advertising or industrial films accepted for competition.

Cats: feature, animation, doc, short, experimental. Formats: 35mm, Beta SP. Preview on VHS or DVD. Entry Fee: None. Contact: Festival del Cortometraggio di Siena c/o Filmclub Associati; 011 39 06 474 5585; fax: 39 06 478 85799; festival@cortoitaliacinema.com; www.cortoitaliacinema.com.

VANCOUVER INT'L FILM FESTIVAL, Sept. 29-Oct. 14, Canada. Deadline: June 15 (Canadian); July 5 (Int'l). Fest presents 300 films from 50 countries at 8 cinemas over 16 days & has become one of N. America's largest int'l fests (after Montreal & Toronto). Cats: any style or genre, doc, feature, short. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, 70mm, 3/4", 1/2", Beta, Beta SP, DigiBeta, DV, DVD. Preview on VHS. Entry Fee: \$50 (\$30 U.S., non-Canadian only). Contact: PoChu AuYeung, Program Manager; (604) 685-0260; fax: 688-8221; viff@viff.org; www.viff.org.

VENICE INT'L FILM FESTIVAL, Aug. 31-Sept. 10, Italy. Deadline: June 30. Fest is one of the most prestigious in the world w/ several int'l sections. Competitive Venice59 & other sections to be confirmed. Founded: 1932. Cats: feature, doc, short, animation, retro. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, Beta SP, Experimental film sections also accepts BVU & Betacam video, Beta, DigiBeta. Preview on VHS. Entry Fee: None. Contact: La Biennale di Venezia Dept. of Cinema; 011 390 41 521 8711; fax: 390 41 522 7539; cinema@labiennale.org; www.labiennale.org.

ZIMBABWE INT'L FILM FESTIVAL, Aug. 26-Sept. 4, Zimbabwe. Deadline: June 13. Festival is an annual project of the Zimbabwe Int'l Film Festival Trust (ZIFFT), a non-profit arts & cultural trust registered w/ the Nat'l Arts Council of Zimbabwe. Cats: feature, doc, short. Formats: 35mm, Beta, DVD. Preview on VHS. Entry Fee: None. Contact: Festival; 011 263 4 730 361; fax: 4 73 48 84; zimfilmfest@zol.co.zw; www.ziff.co.zw.

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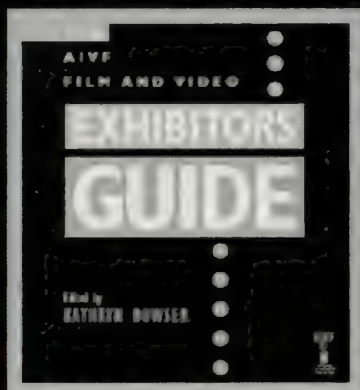
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50 WAYS TO IMPROVE YOUR VIDEO BUSINESS. FREE REPORT. Grow a successful video business in Legal, Wedding, Corporate, TV and more. <http://videouniversity.com/50web.htm>.

DHTV, a progressive, nonprofit community media center and TV station in St. Louis, MO seeks works by indie producers. Half hour and 1 hour lengths. S-VHS accepted, DVD preferred. Nonexclusive rights release upon acceptance. No pay but exposure to 60,000 cable households. Contact Mariah Richardson, dhTV, 625 N. Euclid, St. Louis, MO 63108, (314) 361-8870 x230, mariah@dhtv.org.

LOOKING FOR A GREAT STORY SET IN THE HEARTLAND? See *How High Is A Robin's Nest?* At www.pftrights.com.

THE QUITTAPAHILLA FILM FESTIVAL is looking for features, shorts and documentaries for its Sept. 30-Oct 2, 2005 juried festival. See full details for entry at our website: www.qfilms.org. Send submissions on VHS or DVD to: Attn. QFF, c/o The Allen Theatre, 36 E. Main Street, Annville, PA 17003. Postmark entries by July 1, 2005. Entry fee is \$25.

POSTPRODUCTION

AUDIO POST PRODUCTION: Full service audio post-production facility. Mix-to-picture, ADR, voice-over, sound design & editing. Features, shorts, docs, TV & Radio. Contact Andy, All Ears Inc: (718) 399-6668 (718) 496-9066 andy@allearspost.com.

BRODSKY & TREADWAY: film-to-tape transfers, wet-gate, scene-by-scene, reversal film only. Camera original Regular 8mm, Super 8,

and 16mm. For appt. call (978) 948-7985.

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NEGATIVE CUTTING FOR FEATURES, SHORT FILMS ETC. Expert conforming of 35mm, Super 16 or 16mm negative to work print or Avid cut list. Superb quality work and absolutely clean cuts. Great prices. Matthew 617-244-6730; mwdp@att.net.

PRODUCTION TRANSCRIPTS: Verbatim transcription service for documentaries, journalists, film, and video. Low prices & flat rates based on tape length. www.productiontranscripts.com for details or call: (888) 349-3022.

PREPRODUCTION | DEVELOPMENT

MAUREEN NOLAN: W/ 8 years Miramax experience, script/story/creative consultant offers a full range of consulting services for writers and filmmakers. Script consults, coaching, story development, rewrites, etc. 212-663-9389 or 917-620-6502.



WEB

WEB SITE DESIGNER: Create multimedia web sites, integrating video, sound, and special effects, that promote your films and/or your company. www.sabineprobstdesign.com. Info: Sabine Probst, phone: 646-226-7881, email: sabine@spromo.net

NOTICES

By Lindsay Gelfand

Noncommercial notices are listed free of charge as space permits. *The Independent* reserves the right to edit for length and makes no guarantees about duration of listing. Limit submissions to 60 words and indicate how long your information will be current. Listings must be submitted to notices@aivf.org by the first of the month two months prior to cover date (e.g., Sept. 1 for Nov. issue). Remember to give us complete contact info (name, address, and phone number). Listings do not constitute an endorsement by *The Independent* or AIVF. We try to be as current and accurate as possible, but nevertheless: double-check details before sending anyone anything.

COMPETITIONS

2005 SANTA BARBARA SCRIPT COMPETITION

seeks submissions. Entry fee \$40. Grand Prize \$2000 Option, First Prize \$750. All winners will also receive screenwriting related books, materials and or software. Special Cash Award for Regional Writer to be awarded to a South Coast Resident. (Santa Barbara, Ventura, San Luis Obispo counties in California). Regular submission deadline is June 30th and late is July 31. Contact: Geoff@santabarbarascript.com or visit www.santabarbarascript.com.

BUSINESS FILMS ELAN announces new screenplay contest: \$1000 Feature-length Screenplay Contest — Deadline: June 15, 2005 — Entry is free and winning films will be slotted for production. For more information and submission guidelines, please go to: www.businessfilm.com/businessfilmelan.html.

CONFERENCES | WORKSHOPS

INTERACTIVE PROJECT LAB BANFF NEW MEDIA INSTITUTE WORKSHOP The Interactive Project Lab (IPL) is a unique

alliance of knowledge, resources and funding that accelerates the creative, business and technology skills of Canadian interactive media talent, fostering the creation of innovative projects and viable start-up new media companies. Focused on the production of interactive cultural and entertainment works, the IPL offers a series of opportunities for interactive media producers and projects including: Prototype Acceleration Programs, Intensive Development Clinics, Funding Resources, Professional International Mentorship. For more information, please contact Caitlin O'Donovan, IPL Program Coordinator, at 416.445.1446 ext. 251 or info@iplab.ca.

PUBLICATIONS

DATABASE & DIRECTORY OF LATIN AMERICAN FILM & VIDEO, organized by Int'l Media Resources Exchange, seeks works by Latin American & US Latino ind. producers. To send work or for info, contact Roselly Torres, LAVA, 124 Washington Pl., NY, NY 10014; (212) 463-0108; imre@igc.org.

RESOURCES FUNDS

ARTHUR VINING DAVIS FOUNDATION provides completion funding for educational series assured of airing nat'lly on PBS. Children's series are of particular interest. Consideration will also be given to innovative uses of public TV, including computer online efforts, to enhance educational outreach in schools & communities. Funding for research and preproduction is rarely supported. Recent production grants have ranged from \$100,000 to \$400,000. Proposal guidelines available on website. Contact Dr. Jonathan T. Howe, Arthur Vining Davis Foundation, 225 Water Street, Suite 1510, Jacksonville, FL 32202-5185; arthurvining@bellsouth.net; www.jvm.com/davis.

ARTISTS' FELLOWSHIPS are \$7,000 cash awards made to individual originating artists living and working in the state of New York for use in career development. Grants are awarded in 16 artistic disciplines, with applications accepted in eight categories each year. The next deadline for Artists' Fellowships is Monday, October 3, 2005. At that time we will be

accepting applications in the following categories: Architecture /Environmental Structures, Choreography, Fiction, Music Composition, Painting, Photography, Playwriting /Screenwriting, and Video. To learn more about Artists' Fellowships visit our website at: www.nyfa.org/afp. Applications for the remaining categories: Computer Arts, Crafts, Film, Non-fiction Literature, Performance, Art/Multidisciplinary Work, Poetry, Printmaking Drawing/Artists' Books, and Sculpture—will be accepted in early October 2006.

EXPERIMENTAL TELEVISION CENTER PRESENTATION FUNDS award up to \$1,000 each year to nonprofit media arts organizations in New York State. Funds must go to fees to artists for in-person presentations of film, electronic media, sonic art, and art using new technologies and the internet. Electronic music & work that's primarily commercial, instructional, educational, or promotional not considered. For more info, call program director Sherry Miller Hocking, (607) 687-4341; etc@experimentaltvcenter.org; www.experimentaltvcenter.org.

MEDIA ARTS TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE FUND is designed to help non-profit media arts programs in New York State stabilize, strengthen or restructure their media arts organizational capacity, services and activities. The fund will provide up to \$2,000 per project to organizations which receive support from NYSCA's Electronic Media and Film program. The Media Arts Technical Assistance fund can assist with the hiring of consultants or other activities which contribute to organizational, management and programming issues which influence the media arts activities. Contact Sherry Miller Hocking, Program Director at Experimental Television Center deadlines for application are January 1, 2005; April 1, July 1, and October 1.

NEA INTERNATIONAL DIGITAL FILM-MAKER RESIDENCY 2005 Application Deadline: in hand June 16, 2005 This four week National Endowment for the Arts funded residency offers one month unlimited access to 16mm production and post-production systems, the G4 Final Cut Pro digital editing system and digital video cam-

eras. The month-long residency includes lodging in a funky, nearby hotel, travel, and a \$1000 artist's stipend paid in two installments. This Artist's Residency is directed toward experimental filmmakers who are interested in using new technologies but lack the resources for access and training. In addition to the artist completing and exhibiting at least one new work, the terms of the residency include teaching one local workshop (4 - 8 hours) on any topic related to media art and curating one evening screening of films / videos which relate to the resident's own creative investigations. The selected artist will be notified by June 30, 2005 and may fulfill the terms of the residency between August and November 2005. Unfortunately, full-time students are ineligible to apply for the residencies. Call, email, or drop in for an application form and guidelines. Go to www.squeaky.org/opportunities.html to download the application form, or contact us to send you one. Send Application to Attn: NEA Digital Filmmaker Residency, Squeaky Wheel, 175 Elmwood, Buffalo, NY 14201.

MICROCINEMA SCREENINGS

DAHLIA'S FLIX & MIX, a weekly showcase of new film & music held on Tuesdays at NY's Sugar, is seeking submissions. Showcases fresh and previously undistributed film & video work, as well as DJs spinning great music. No guest list, cover charge, or submission fee. Contact dsmith@independentfilm.com or stop by Sugar any Tuesday evening (doors open 7pm, screenings begin 8pm). Send submissions: a VHS or DVD copy and a brief synopsis to: Dahlia Smith, c/o SUGAR, 311 Church St., New York, NY 10013.

TOURING PROGRAMS

THE HIP HOP FILM FEST TOUR is an ongoing event hitting major cities & cultural centers on a global level. Organizers are indie filmmakers looking to share their visual documents of the vibrant Hip Hop culture and connect with other mediamakers. Deadline: Ongoing. Visit www.hiphopfilmfest.com or email Info@HipHopFilmFest.com, or call (415) 424-0987.

BROADCAST CABLECAST

AXELGREASE, Buffalo cable access program of experimental film & video under 28 min. Send vhs, svhs, [mini] dv, labeled w/ name, address, title, length, additional info & SASE for tape return to: Squeaky Wheel, 175 Elmwood Ave., Buffalo, NY 14201; (718) 884-7172; office@squeaky.org; www.squeaky.org.

INDUSTRIAL TELEVISION: Cutting-edge cable access show now in its 9th year, is looking for experimental, humorous, quirky dramatic, erotic, horror/sci-fi, animated and underground works for inclusion in the new season. Our program goes out to over 140,000 Time Warner cable households every Sat. night at midnight. Because we specifically request late-night time slots, we are allowed to air "R-rated" content. Controversial, uncensored and subversive material is encouraged & given priority. We guarantee exposure in the NYC area. We accept: DVC Pro, mini-DV, SVHS, VHS, 3/4" SP, 3/4", Hi-8. Contact: Edmund Varuolo, c/o 2droogies productions, Box 020206, Staten Island, NY 10302; ed@2droogies.com; www.industrialtelevision.com.

PUBLIC BROADCASTING SERVICE accepts proposals for programs & completed programs by independent producers aimed at public television audiences. Consult PBS web page for content priorities & submission guidelines before submitting. Contact Cheryl Jones, Program Development & Independent Film, PBS Headquarters, 1320 Braddock Place, Alexandria, VA 22314; (703) 739-5150; fax 739-5295; cjones@pbs.org; www.pbs.org/producers.

SRS CINEMA, LLC seeks a variety of different video & film productions for VHS/DVD/TV worldwide release. Seeking feature-length nonfiction productions in all areas of the special-interest or instructional fields, cutting-edge documentaries & children & family programming. Also seeking feature-length fiction. Supernatural-themed products wanted, especially supernatural/horror fiction shot documentary style. Contact: Ron Bonk, Sub Rosa Studios, (315) 652-3868; Email webmaster@b-movie.com; www.b-movie.com.

WORK WANTED

By Lindsay Gelfand

Noncommercial notices are listed free of charge as space permits. *The Independent* reserves the right to edit for length and makes no guarantees about duration of listing. Limit submissions to 60 words and indicate how long your information will be current. Listings must be submitted to notices@aiyf.org by the first of the month two months prior to cover date (e.g., Sept. 1 for Nov. issue). Remember to give us complete contact info (name, address, and phone number). Listings do not constitute an endorsement by *The Independent* or AIYF. We try to be as current and accurate as possible, but nevertheless, double-check details before sending anyone anything.

4TH ANNUAL BARE BONES SCRIPT-2-SCREEN FEST & SCREENWRITERS CONFERENCE

in Tulsa, OK is looking for independent screenwriters & filmmakers to enter competition in variety of categories: feature screenplays & movies, short movies & screenplays, teleplays, trailers, doc., animation, actor monologues, Shoot 'N OK location micro-screenplay will get produced. Submission Deadline for the Festival, which will take place between October 13-16 is July 31, 2005. For more details script2screenfest@yahoo.com or visit www.script2screenfilmfestival.com.

BOXCAR, a screening series held every two months at the Detroit Film Center, is currently seeking submissions of short experimental and documentary work. Send submissions on mini DV along with a 2-3 sentence synopsis. There is no form

or entry fee. Send work to: Detroit Film Center, c/o Boxcar, 1227 Washington Blvd. Detroit, MI 48226. Please include SASE for return of tape. Email boxcarcinema@hotmail.com.

CELLULOID SOCIAL CLUB is a monthly screening series in Vancouver featuring the best in independent provocative short & feature films & videos followed by fun & frolic. Hosted by Ken Hegan at the ANZA Club, #3 West 8th Ave., Vancouver, BC. No minors. Prizes galore. For more info call (604) 730-8090 or email celluloid@shaw.ca; www.CelluloidSocialClub.com.

DREAM SERIES: Seeks challenging social-issue documentaries that promote frank community discussions about issues of racial prejudice and social injustice that fall under the Martin Luther King, Jr., legacy.

Selected works are screened for this ongoing monthly series at the MLK National Historic Site in Atlanta, GA, and promoted, listed, and reviewed in local print. Formats: VHS, Beta. Send non returnable VHS screeners to Exhibitions Curator IMAGE Film & Video Center 535 Means Street, NW, Suite C Atlanta, Georgia 30318 or visit www.imagefv.org.

FIRST SUNDAYS COMEDY FILM FESTIVAL

Deadline: ongoing. A monthly festival featuring the best in comedy and short film/digi/animation followed by an after-screening networking event. An ongoing festival held the first Sunday of each month at the Pioneer Theater in New York, First Sundays is the premiere opportunity to showcase work and meet talented directors and other indie dv/film folk. Cats: short (under 20 min.), comedy, anima-

End.

Don't let your script end here.

Get **Independent** and become a member of AIVF, the Association of Independent Video and Filmmakers. By joining AIVF you can enjoy benefits like **trade discounts** on supplies and services; discounts on **workshops** and **resource guides**; access to affordable **health coverage**. AIVF offers a searchable **directory** of domestic and international film festivals, plus a whole lot more.....

visit us at www.aivf.org

AIVF
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tion/dv/film. Formats: Mini-DV, DVD, VHS. Entry Fee: \$20. Contact: (email) film@chicagocitylimits.com or see site: www.firstsundays.com.

INDIEEXPOSURE is a new festival that is designed to build an ongoing and more open network for independent film professionals and "enthusiasts." The goal is to provide continued opportunities for great filmmakers to showcase their work, while offering film buffs more variety and easier access to a broader independent film community. I.E. will sponsor screenings of select films on a monthly basis at a local Los Angeles theatre. For submission procedure, email IndieExposure@verizon.net and type "SUBMISSION" in the subject line.

MINDJACK DIGITAL STUDIOS is seeking submissions for their new show called Independent Axis, which showcases independent art: shorts primarily and videos, trailers, web short, flash animation and artists showcase. Submissions are free of charge and will be broadcast to a

possible 80,000 households on a NBC affiliate. You can find out more information at www.mindjakk.com.

OCULARIS provides a forum for film & video makers to exhibit their work at Brooklyn's Galapagos Art & Performance Space. All works are considered for programming in the weekly series, travelling programs & other special projects. Local film/video makers can submit works under 15 min. to Open Zone, a quarterly open screening. Nat'l/int'l works & medium length works (15-45 min.) will be considered for curated group shows. For submission guidelines & other info, visit the website www.ocularis.net; or email: shortfilms@ocularis.net.

STREET MOVIES is a year-round screening series presented by Philadelphia's Scribe Video Center. Free series tours Philly neighborhoods throughout the year & offers a program of indy cinema to the general public w/ a forum for dialogue. Prefer social issue, thought-provoking work of any genre or style as well as kid-

friendly pieces. Must be under 60 mins & will receive an honorarium if selected. Founded: 1997. Send 1/2" VHS or DVD w/ synopsis and contact info. Contact: Phil Rothberg, Program Coordinator; 215-222-4201; email stmovies@scribe.org; www.scribe.org.

URBAN MEDIAMAKERS FILM FESTIVAL 2005

is accepting submissions for the 4th Annual Urban Mediamakers Film Festival to be held in Atlanta, Georgia, October 14-16, 2005. All genres accepted including short, feature, and documentaries on VHS and DVD (DVD copies must include a VHS as well). Deadline for submissions is August 1, 2005 with a entry fee of \$10. Please mail a VHS/DVD copy of your film and include a synopsis of the film, length of film, a short bio and resume of the director/producer/writer. Also include press materials if they are available. Mail all entries to: Urban Mediamakers Film Festival 2005, PMB 315, 1353 Riverstone Parkway, Suite 120, Canton, Georgia 30114, Attention: Festival Coordinator. For more information visit www.urbanmediamakers.com or call 770.345.8048.

WILD BLUE YONDER NETWORK

(www.gowildblueyonder.com) presents the Cloud 9 Short Film Festival. This ongoing film festival selects 5 films each month to run the length of the month on the Wild Blue Yonder Network, the in-flight entertainment network of Frontier Airlines. Each monthly film will be voted on online; at the end of the year, one film will be declared the year's winner, receiving a \$5,000 grand prize. To submit: go to www.gowildblueyonder.com and choose the link for how to submit or go to www.bigfilmshorts.com and click on the link for Wild Blue Yonder and follow the submission instructions. Contact Brant Kriscewicz of Wild Blue Yonder at 303-382-4382 or bkriscewicz@henrygill.com. Or mail your film, along with a completed submission form to David Russell of NANOTV at 100 S. Sunrise Way #289, Palm Springs, CA 92262.

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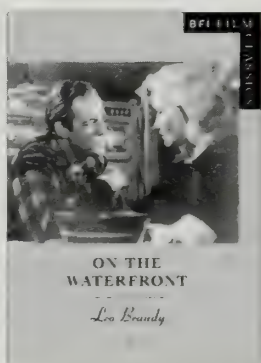
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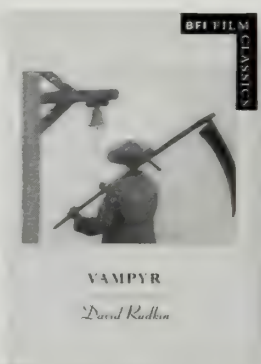
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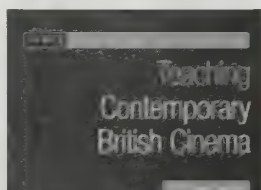
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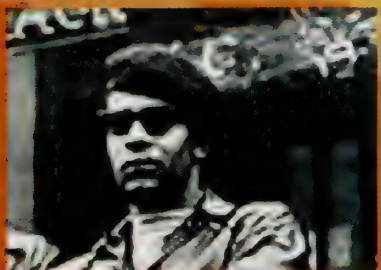
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The AIVF Regional Salons provide an opportunity for members to discuss work, meet other independents, share war stories, and connect with the AIVF community across the country.

Visit www.aivf.org/regional for an overview of the broad variety of Regional Salon programs.

Be sure to contact your local Salon leader to confirm the date, time, and location of the next meeting

ALBANY/TROY, NY:

UPSTATE INDEPENDENTS

When: First Tuesdays, 6:30 p.m.

Where: Bulmer Telecommunications Center, Hudson Valley Community College, 80 Vandenburg Ave., Troy, NY

Contact: Jeff Burns, (518) 366-1538
albany@aivf.org

ATLANTA, GA:

IMAGE

When: Second Tuesdays, 7 p.m.

Where: Atlanta Contemporary Art Center, 353 Means Street

Contact: Sonia Vassell, (404) 352-4225 x20
atlanta@aivf.org; www.imagefv.org

CHARLESTON, SC:

When: Last Thursdays, 6:30 p.m.

Where: Charleston County Library
68 Calhoun Street

Contact: Peter Paolini, (843) 805-6841; or Peter Wentworth, charleston@aivf.org

CLEVELAND, OH:

OHIO INDEPENDENT FILM FESTIVAL

Contact: Annetta Marion or Bernadette Gillora, (216) 651-7315
cleveland@aivf.org; www.ohiofilms.com

COLUMBIA, SC:

When: Second Sundays

Where: Art Bar, 1211 Park St.

Contact: Wade Sellers, (803) 929-0066
columbia@aivf.org

DALLAS, TX:

VIDEO ASSOCIATION OF DALLAS

When: Bi-monthly

Contact: Bart Weiss, (214) 428-8700
dallas@aivf.org

EDISON, NJ:

Where: Passion River Productions,
190 Lincoln Hwy.

Contact: Allen Chou, (732) 321-0711
edison@aivf.org; www.passionriver.com

FORT WAYNE, IN:

Contact: Erik Mollberg
(260) 691-3258; fortwayne@aivf.org

HOUSTON, TX:

SWAMP

When: Last Tuesdays, 6:30 p.m.

Where: 1519 West Main

Contact: Mary Lampe, (713) 522-8592
houston@aivf.org

HUNTSVILLE, AL:

Contact: Charles White, (256) 895-0423
huntsville@aivf.org

JEFFERSON COUNTY, AL:

Contact: Paul Godby, (205) 956-3522
jeffersoncounty@aivf.org

LINCOLN, NE:

NEBRASKA INDEPENDENT FILM PROJECT

When: Second Wednesdays, 5:30 p.m.

Where: Telepro, 1844 N Street

Contact: Jared Minary, lincoln@aivf.org,
(402) 467-1077, www.nifp.org

LOS ANGELES, CA:

When: Third Mondays, 7:30 p.m.

Where: EZTV, 18th Street arts Center, 629
18th St., #6, Santa Monica

Contact: Michael Masucci
(310) 829-3389; losangeles@aivf.org

MILWAUKEE, WI:

MILWAUKEE INDEPENDENT FILM SOCIETY

When: First Wednesdays, 7 p.m.

Where: Milwaukee Enterprise Center,
2821 North 4th, Room 140

Contact: Laura Gembolis, (414) 688-2375
milwaukee@aivf.org; www.mifs.org/salo

NASHVILLE, TN

Where: See www.naivf.com for events

Contact: Stephen Lackey, nashville@aivf.org

PORTLAND, OR:

Where: Hollywood Theatre

Contact: David Bryant, (503) 244-4225
portland@aivf.org

ROCHESTER, NY:

Where: Visual Studies Workshop

Contact: Liz Lehmann
(585) 377-1109; rochester@aivf.org

SAN DIEGO, CA:

When: Monthly

Where: Media Arts Center, 921 25th Street

Contact: Ethan van Thillo (619) 230-1938
sandiego@aivf.org

SAN FRANCISCO, CA:

Contact: Kathy Vaguilar
(510) 482-3484; sanfrancisco@aivf.org

SEATTLE, WA:

SEATTLE INDIE NETWORK

When: Bi-monthly

Where: Wiggly World and 911 Media Arts
Center

Contact: Andrea Mydlarz, Fiona Otway;
seattle@aivf.org

TUCSON, AZ:

Contact: Jana Segal, (520) 906-7295
tucson@aivf.org

WASHINGTON, DC:

Contact: DC Salon hotline,
(202) 661-7145, washingtondc@aivf.org

THANK YOU

The Association of Independent Video and Filmmakers (AIVF) provides a wide range of programs and services for independent moving image makers and the media community, including *The Independent* and a series of resource publications, seminars and workshops, information services, and arts and media policy advocacy.

None of this work would be possible without the generous support of the AIVF membership and the following organizations:

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THE LIST

YOU CALL THIS WEIRD?

By Lindsay Gelfand

How experimental can an independent film be before it gets just straight-up weird?

And what, in your opinion, does the art of experimental filmmaking really entail?

"I think you can be as 'experimental' as you want as long as you are trying to communicate something. It's a category that usually means you're not telling a story the same way everyone else does. The most important thing is to have something clear you're trying to communicate, then decide on the method."

—Nicholas McCarthy, director, *Cry For Help*

"At its core, experimental filmmaking is an exploration and a challenge of the plastic elements of film as a presentation format. So, who is to say what is too weird? Certainly not me. Though one can critique and judge the film's craft, relevance, and impact; its insight, thoughtfulness, and thoroughness; and its coarse or fragile aesthetics, as well as its contents and goals."

—Alvaro Donado, producer, *Messengers* and *Family Portrait*

"I guess the point at which it would get weird is the point that it crosses from objective to subjective, where it begins to not make as much sense to the majority and forces the individual to struggle with finding meaning in it. The threshold will be different for everyone—each finds purpose beyond what the next does. It doesn't have to mean something abstract with electronic noises, just pushing the envelope. I think elements of that can be found in a lot of work."

—Chad Burris, producer, *Goodnight Irene*

"If we look back, some of Luis Bünel's collaboration with Salvador Dali, I'm sure, was interpreted as 'weird.' But as long as there is a strong subconscious or conscious message to the masses...why not?"

—Maritza Alvarez, writer/cinematographer, *Pura Lengua*

"I saw a lot of great experimental films this year at Clermont-Ferrand: *Phantom Limb*, *The Raftsmen's Razor*, *The Final Solution*. Some were tedious ... others were absolutely amazing

and were truly groundbreaking. I guess that's what experimental filmmaking is really about: give audiences something they've never seen and/or weren't expecting. When it works, it's incredible. And it's painful to watch if it isn't pulled off."

—John Bryant, director, *Oh My God*

"Generally an independent film can rate up to like an EXP 7.1 before it will be deemed Too Weird For Audiences. The scale will differ slightly in Europe, but it's safe to say that a 7.3 or higher will land you in Anthology Film Archives (or even further downtown, where things can get Downright Weird...) If I were advising an aspiring independent filmmaker today, I would say shoot for the 6.8-7.0—you can always make it more experimental if you don't get distribution. The art is in setting the Weird mark that is right for your audience, and then nailing it."

—Bill Morrison, director/producer, *Outerborough*

"Experimental filmmaking should always keep in mind that an audience comes to a film expecting to be told a story or to find a piece of themselves within the story. So even in its strangest and weirdest realms, experimental films must keep a human and emotional connection with its audience."

—Tonia Barber, director, *Raw*

"All films are experiments if you accept the definition of experiment as investigation. Every film I've ever made has been an experiment on multiple levels, from story and character to production and process. I always discover something new and never know where I'll end up before I get started. If I always knew exactly where I was going, I think filmmaking would be kind of boring."

—Eric Escobar, director, *One Weekend a Month*

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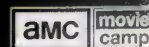
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Richard Sowada on the glory of it all

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on the *Shanghai* family drama for
Playboy, and advice from Terrence Malick

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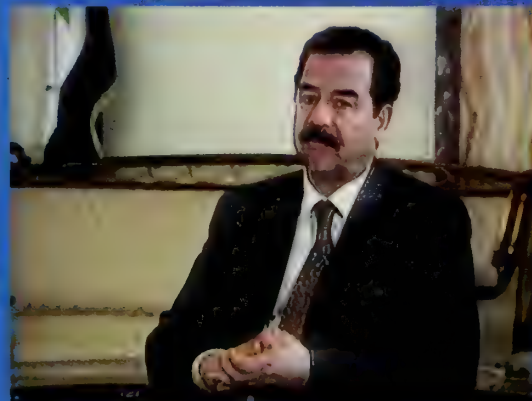
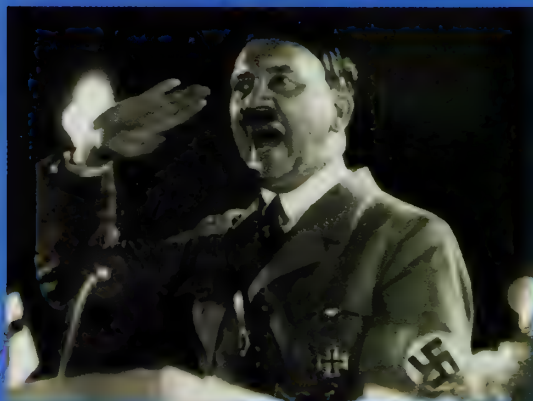
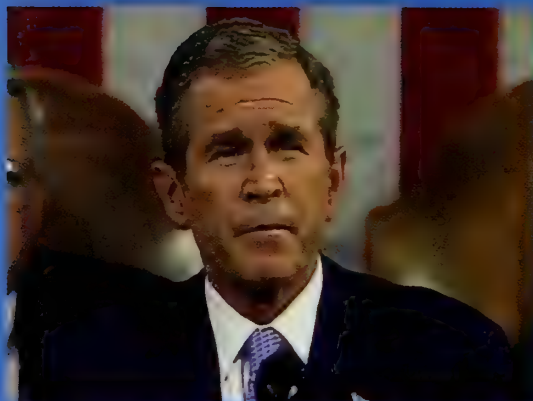
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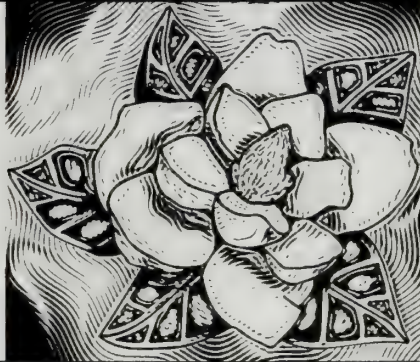
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Rebecca Carroll [Editor-in-Chief]

EDITOR'S LETTER

Dear Readers,

I love people with reputations—big, fierce, impressive ones that scare you a little, but then also intrigue the hell out of you. I don't mean the Michael Jackson variety of reputation. More along the lines of the BBC's Nick Fraser. Show me a film industry person who doesn't know who this guy is, and who wouldn't do some pretty dastardly deeds in order to get a meeting with him. But the guy has a reputation for being a little, how shall we call it, salty? I'd only heard stories when I met him for the first time at Sundance a couple years ago, and frankly, I found him to be a perfect delight. But then I go for that kind of highbrow, intellectual, sometimes smug Brit type; before that atrocious *Yellow Dog* book, I was a huge Martin Amis fan.

Our own Lisa Selin Davis had the opportunity to talk with Nick Fraser, head commissioner of the BBC's "Storyville," in May, when he was in New York for all of five minutes, and I'm thrilled to have her feature profile of him lead off our first ever "Foreign Film" and/or "World Cinema" issue (page 36). We didn't exactly go about defining what we meant by that. Rather, I thought it would be interesting to look at some places, cultures, and peoples around the world and see what kind of film communities they have—what kinds of stories the films and filmmakers are telling, their varying styles and perspectives, and what the future of their respective communities looks like.

The ever eloquent and curious David Alm gives a great portrait of what's happening with film in India—both the more

independent angle as well as the whole "Bollywood" business (page 40). San Diego-based freelancer Victor Payan looks at new film movements in Mexico and making movies in Tijuana (page 44), while Revelation Film Festival director Richard Sowada filed a First Person piece from Perth, Australia, where the gin is cold and the projector's hot (page 24). He writes: "[Revelation's] philosophy and approach is simple, and the background of the event is found in smoke-filled noisy bars and venues well outside of established film circuits and more accustomed to wild rock than celluloid."

We have a gorgeous Production Journal from Haitian-born filmmaker Michele Stephenson, who undertook what sounds to be a terrifically inspired and somewhat dangerous journey to document human rights activism around the world (page 15). And Sarah Coleman profiles the smart, visionary filmmaker Margarethe von Trotta. The fact that she's a woman is totally incidental (page 19).

I talked to Bai Ling, who is just as free and spirited as she wants to be, about her festival film *The Beautiful Country* (page 27), acting, and posing for *Playboy*. And by the way, who do you have to sleep with these days to get a left-leaning program on public television? *The Independent's* policy columnist Matt Dunne, who recently announced that he is running for Congress, sheds some light (page 54).

Enjoy, and thanks for reading
The Independent,
Rebecca Carroll

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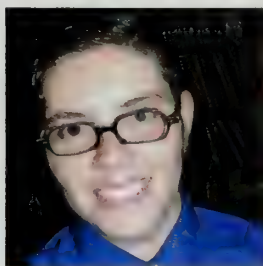
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DAVID ALM teaches film history and writing at two colleges in Chicago. His writing has appeared in *Artbyte*, *Camerawork*, *RES*, *Silicon Alley Reporter*, *SOMA*, and the *The Utne Reader*. He's also contributed to books on web design and digital filmmaking, and assisted in making documentaries about architecture and garbage.



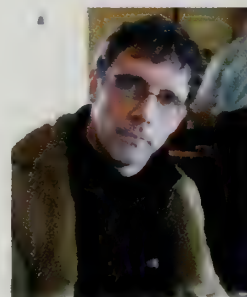
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NIALL MCKAY is a San Francisco-based freelance writer and broadcast journalist. Currently, he is an associate at the Center for Investigative Reporting in San Francisco where he has been working on the Latino prison gangs project. Recently, Niall shot and edited a documentary about racism in Ireland and a documentary about Samoa's fafaine (men who are raised as women). He has written for *San Francisco* magazine, *The Economist*, *The Financial Times*, *Wired*, *Salon*, and *The New York Times*. His broadcast credits include RTE and National Public Radio's KQED FM in San Francisco. Niall is the director of Filum: The San Francisco Irish Film Festival. More information at www.niall.org.

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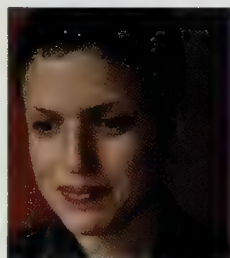
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FERNANDO RAMIREZ, ESQ. is an attorney in private practice in New York City, where he lives with his wife and 12-year-old son/aspiring doc-maker. He graduated from Fordham University and earned his law degree from Brooklyn Law School. His work involves transactional entertainment law. He drafts, reviews, and negotiates industry agreements, and he advises on copyright, trademark, contracts, privacy, and business formation matters for independent filmmakers, executive producers, media personalities, songwriters, personal managers, independent labels, and non-profit film organizations.

FERNANDA ROSSI, known as the Documentary Doctor, is a filmmaker and story consultant who helps filmmakers craft the story structure of their films in all stages of the filmmaking process. She has doctorated over 100 documentaries and fiction scripts and is the author of *Trailer Mechanics: A Guide to Making Your Documentary Fundraising Trailer*. For more information: www.documentarydoctor.com.



RICHARD SOWADA is one of Australia's most active screen culture practitioners. His expertise includes over 15 years in production, distribution, exhibition, curating, strategic planning, and screen-event board participation. He is committed to the development of local audiences and the embracing of progressive industry practices. Currently, he is pursuing a PhD concerning the WWII works of Frank Capra and their influence on documentary. He is founder and director of the Revelation Perth International Film Festival and works as a consultant to the Australian Film Commission and National Screen and Sound Archive.



MICHELE STEPHENSON is a Haitian-born filmmaker and former human rights attorney. She has trained human rights activists from all over the world in video production and produced award-winning documentaries and video production guides for grassroots activists. With a commitment to making personal human stories that are too often excluded from mainstream media, Stephenson and her husband, Joe Brewster, recently launched their production company, The Rada Film Group. Excerpts of their work can be found at www.radafilmm.com.

We regret misspelling Nick Schager's name in his photo caption in the June issue.



DOUGLAS SINGLETON writes film and theater criticism for *The Brooklyn Rail* and for *L Magazine*. His website, www.dispactke.com, features photography, prose, and multimedia experimentation. A photography installation and screening of a short film collaboration with Nadege Catenacci, *Spatial Fragile Raw*, was shown at White Rabbit in March. When summer calls, "Doug come-a-running."



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NEWS



Todd Wagner, co-owner and CEO of the California-based 2929 Entertainment (Reid Horn)

2929 Entertainment

Steven Soderbergh's new experiment is bigger than Julia's boobs

By Leah Hochbaum

Steven Soderbergh likes to experiment. He experimented with Julia Roberts's boobs in *Erin Brockovich*. He experimented with viewers' patience in *Full Frontal*. And now, through the Oscar-winning director's new deal with 2929 Entertainment to direct six films to debut simultaneously in movie theaters, on DVD, and on satellite TV, he's experimenting with the very way the film industry works.

"It's about choice," said Todd Wagner, co-owner and CEO of the California-

based 2929. "We're letting people decide for the first time if they want to stay home when a movie debuts, to see it 'live,' or rent it for viewing at their convenience. I truly believe it has the potential to forever change the economics of making and releasing movies."

The films made during this "day and date" initiative—as 2929 is calling it—will be budgeted at \$1–2 million, produced in 1080i high-definition format, then released concurrently in Landmark Theatres, a chain owned by 2929, and

on HDNet Movies, a high-def cable channel also owned by the entertainment company. To keep it all in the family, distribution will be through 2929's Magnolia Pictures label.

Soderbergh, the brains behind such films as *Traffic* (2000), *The Limey* (1999), and *Sex, Lies, and Videotape* (1989), will maintain creative control over all six pictures, a prospect that might have frightened most entertainment bigwigs—but not those at 2929.

"I had gotten to know Steven over the last couple of years by being producing partners on *Criminal* and *The Jacket*," said Wagner, speaking for himself and 2929 co-founder and Dallas Mavericks owner Mark Cuban. "I respect him a great deal for his honesty and integrity—which is often in short supply in this business. He's a great fit for us in that he still enjoys making smaller budget indie-type movies."

In a written statement, Soderbergh shared Wagner's enthusiasm for the endeavor: "I'm excited to work with Todd and Mark, and appreciate the freedom to create independent films under this new distribution model. All of us see consumer choice driving the future of the movie industry, and this is a giant leap in that direction."

Though Soderbergh's high-definition projects will mark the first time that theatrical movies are released in this manner, HDNet Films—a production company owned by 2929—has already employed this strategy with a documentary.

Enron: The Smartest Guys in the Room, HDNet Film's very first production, was released theatrically by Magnolia Pictures in April and simultaneously premiered on HDNet Movies.

Soderbergh is already hard at work on the first film for this new enterprise, *Bubble*, a murder mystery set in Ohio. And, in keeping with his modus operandi of rampant experimentation, he's hired regular people from the town where the movie is set instead of professional actors. Of course, in attempting to consolidate a film's marketing costs into a single, shorter time frame, 2929 is also futzing around with the unknown. But

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considering they own the theater chain and the movie channel these films will air on, they're pretty much free to experiment all they want now, aren't they.

The Low Budget Agreement

In its first year in 2002, just four writers and would-be filmmakers submitted their works for consideration to a pilot program offered by the Writers Guild of America. In its second year, there were 11. And in 2004, 35 films were made as a result of the Low Budget Agreement.

Though it's too early to tell how many films will be made this year—an unnamed number are currently pending—it's safe to say that writers with big dreams and small budgets are slowly but surely realizing that if they want to see their films on the silver screen, the Low Budget Agreement is the way to go.

"The situation is evolving," said Kay Schaber, an independent film program executive for Writers Guild of America, west, when reached at her Los Angeles office. "With digital gaining in popularity, there's more of an opportunity to do low-budget films these days. It's so much easier than it used to be."

Available in 2002—though all but unheard of until last year when WGA officials started putting the word out full-force at film festivals all over the nation—the agreement, which is only offered at the writer's request, allows for the deferral of all or part of the purchase compensation for an existing screenplay.

For films budgeted at \$500,000 and below, the entire purchase price and the first rewrite can be deferred. For films budgeted between \$500,000 and \$1.2 million, \$10,000 of the purchase price is paid at the start of filming, and the rewrite may be completely deferred.

Despite the obvious benefits of this deal, it's taken filmmakers a while to catch on to this seemingly easy way to finance their low-budget indies—due mostly to writers' fears of forfeiting their rights to reacquire their material should the film wallow in development hell. But writers need not worry about losing their babies—the agreement clearly states that should the flick not be made within 18 months, writers are entitled to reacquire



Rodrigo Garcia was one of four writers who capitalized on a new kind of WGA contract for his film, *Nine Lives* (WGA)

their material.

And so those in the know at WGA engaged an army of attorneys and agents at Sundance, Slamdance and the Los Angeles Film Festival to educate and edify those whom they hope will one day be among the filmmaking elite. "We believe the market for films in this budget range is growing," said Academy Award-winning and WGA Award-nominated screenwriter Bill Condon in a statement. "As it does, so should the Guild's protections of those writers whose voices are being represented on screen."

Four films whose writers capitalized on this WGA contract debuted at Sundance this year. *Brick*, Rian Johnson's directorial debut about a teenage loner forced into the seedy underbelly of high school crime when the girl he loves turns up dead; *Nine Lives*, a female relationship drama from Rodrigo Garcia; *Hard Candy*, Brian Nelson's titillating screenplay of a 32-year-old man who brings home a 14-year-old girl he befriends on the internet; and *Ellie Parker*, Scott Coffey's comedic take on the life of a struggling actress. Most if not all of these films would probably never have been produced if not for the agreement.

The latter film, which stars Naomi

Watts as the eponymous heroine, was shot on a \$1,000 camera without sound or lighting. Low budget is as low budget does.

Did 20th Century Fox pull a Milli Vanilli?

They hired Keanu. They draped Laurence Fishburne in leather. They made those fight scenes look hella good. Nobody's challenging the Wachowski brothers' ample contributions as directors of *The Matrix* trilogy. But what is currently in dispute in a California court is whether or not they actually wrote the futuristic saga—or simply ripped off the idea from someone else.

Bronx-born screenwriter Sophia Stewart claims that *The Third Eye*, an epic she says she wrote in the early 80s, was used as the seed for all three *Matrix* films and all three *Terminator* films, and is suing a whole mess of people to prove it, including the Wachowskis, 20th Century Fox, Warner Bros., and *Terminator* director James Cameron.

"It's a ridiculous claim," said Bruce Isaacs, an attorney for Warner Bros., pointing out that Stewart's main claim to *Terminator* ownership is that her script contained the phrase: "We will be back," while the finished product contained the

similar but singular and contracted “I’ll be back.” Arnold Schwarzenegger’s cyborg success came out in 1984. “Where has she been for the last 20 years?” Isaacs asked.

She’s been around. But not going to the movies a whole lot, apparently. “I did not see *The Terminator*,” Stewart said, when reached at her home in Las Vegas. “If I had seen it, I would’ve filed suit way before 2003.” The self-proclaimed “Mother of the Matrix,” Stewart is like a spurned and more litigious version of the film’s kindly, wise Oracle character. She contends that she submitted her work to 20th Century Fox in the early 80s but never heard back. And Stewart thought little of it until years later when she finally watched the movie, was shocked to see her own story in Cameron’s *The Terminator*, and felt sure that Fox had passed her work on to the future *Titanic* director.

Fox asserts that it had no involvement with any of the three *Terminator* films—that it neither produced nor owns any of the pictures and passed nothing on to Cameron. “She keeps talking about how



The Matrix, which Stewart claims she created (courtesy Warner Bros.)

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Sophia Stewart (courtesy Sophia Stewart)

she had access to Fox," said Isaacs. "OK, why does this have any significance?" Because Stewart thinks it does.

"I'm the real thing like Coca-Cola," she said. "I shopped [my book] to Fox return receipt and I've got a paper trail to prove it. These people are all about taking your money, screwing you, and making you like it all along."

As for *The Matrix*, Stewart avers that Andy and Larry Wachowski placed an ad in a national magazine in 1986 asking for science-fiction scripts, and she sent

hers in response. "Andy was in high school and Larry was in college in 1986," Isaacs said. "They never ran this advertisement. They never got stuff from her."

He contends that he has asked Stewart repeatedly for a copy of this ad, but that she has yet to produce it, adding that the Wachowskis wrote *The Matrix* themselves between 1992 and 1993, then pitched it to producer Joel Silver, who in turn pitched it to Warner Bros.

Stewart sees it differently. She's positive that the story is hers, recognizing similarities between the two, including characters, dialogue and major plot points, and she is pushing ahead with her lawsuit.

"In Stewart's story, she has a messiah figure," Isaacs said. "*The Matrix* has a messiah figure in Neo [played by Keanu Reeves]. She thinks this is an indication that someone has appropriated her material. But there are all sorts of messiah figures out there. There's Moses and Jesus and Luke Skywalker. In analyzing the similarities, there's really nothing there."

But Stewart won't have it.

"I thought writers discussed their work with the public," she said, noting that the Wachowski brothers are almost as famous for their refusal to do any press for three of the biggest films of the last decade as they are for helming those same three films. She views this as an admission of their guilt for pilfering her piece so freely.

"It's like someone trying to talk for Rembrandt. How the hell could someone talk for Rembrandt if they never painted a masterpiece themselves? They've so cleverly pulled the wool over people's eyes that hell, they're in the Matrix."

Isaacs is confident that once any judge hears Stewart's allegations that the lawsuit will be thrown out entirely, but he is prepared to go to trial if necessary. "I hope to prove that none of my clients had access to her material and that there just ain't similarities there."

Stewart, though, itches for her day in court. "They pulled a Milli Vanilli," she said. "That's going to come out."



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National Conference for Media Reform

There's something wrong with the world today and—though Democrats throughout the nation are positive it's because of Fox News's very existence—it's gradually become clear that there's really something amiss with the media at large.

More than 2,200 communications industry insiders gathered in May at the Millennium Hotel in downtown St. Louis for the National Conference for Media Reform to discuss the issue. "I think that across the country, everyone feels there's something terribly wrong with the media," said media consultant and conference attendee Alyce Myatt. "There have been lots of distractions lately—with indecency and all of that," she said, referring to the FCC's post-Superbowl breast-suppress-fest. "That's certainly an issue, but the fact is that we don't have open media, and we're calling ourselves a democracy. The conference was able to tap that distress."

Panels on media ownership and consolidation, media activism, and grassroots organizing for media change were held

throughout the three-day sold-out conference, which was hosted by the Free Press, a nonpartisan media reform group based in Northampton, Massachusetts. The conference—organized with the purpose of trying to figure out how to fix what's wrong with today's newspapers, magazines, and broadcast media—attracted the likes of left-wing comedian cum Air America radio host Al Franken, *Outfoxed: Rupert Murdoch's War on Journalism* director Robert Greenwald, and Bill Moyers of PBS, who gave a scathing speech calling for a series of town hall meetings where viewers can talk directly to station managers about what they really want from public broadcasting.

"That great mob that is democracy is rarely heard," said Moyers, former host of the public broadcaster's newsmagazine 'NOW with Bill Moyers,' speaking before a jam-packed room. "That's not the fault of the current residents of the White House and Capitol. There is a great chasm between those of us in the business and those who depend on TV and radio as their window to the world.

We treat them too much like audiences and not enough like citizens. They are invited to look through the window, but too infrequently to participate." Myatt echoed Moyers's sentiments. "There isn't sufficient outreach to the community," she said. "We'd like to see stronger bridges between media outlets and the public."

Also present at the conference were FCC commissioners Michael Copps and Jonathan Adelstein, who asked for the public's aid in getting their agency to withstand new efforts to loosen up rules allowing big corporations to buy more TV and radio stations. While the conference drew tons of media attention, it remains to be seen whether or not it will actually be an effective tool for media reform.

"Reform is a long-term investment with lots of moving parts and pieces," said attendee Karen Helmerson, director of the Electronic Media and Film Program at the New York State Council on the Arts. Myatt agreed, adding: "Media impacts every aspect of our lives. Something terribly wrong has happened, and it's incumbent upon us to rectify what's wrong." ★

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Tools You Can Use

By David Alm



Fisheye lens

A Fisheye View

This spring, Van Nuys-based Schneider Optics introduced a new fish-eye lens designed specifically for consumer DV camcorders. Priced below \$3,000, the Xtreme Fisheye mounts directly onto the front of a camcorder's lens to provide a horizontal angled view of approximately 160 degrees. The manufacturer touts the lens's suitability for action sports footage, music videos, and tight shots that might be impossible without such a wide-angle lens. Acid trips, voyeur POV shots, and other such uses are up to you and your creative discretion.

www.centuryoptics.com

It's in the Bag

Two new bags from Petrol, a Tel Aviv-based bag-manufacturing firm, prove that your camera's carriage can be almost as complex as the camera itself. Made of heavy-duty Cordura and ballistic nylon over multiple layers of shock-absorbent foam padding, the lightweight WingBag and WingRoll bags are tailored specifically for Sony HVR-ZIU and HDR-FX1 camcorders. Featuring multiple compartments, semi-rigid dividers,

mesh pockets, and even an adjustable ergonomic shoulder strap, the WingBag sells for \$199. If long walks await your next shoot, you might opt for the WingRoll, equipped with inline skates and a square-frame tote bar, for \$229. www.petrolbags.com.

Another option for those whose projects take them to the mountains, white-water rapids, or just the inclement streets of Manhattan comes from Centennial, Colorado-based bag-makers, M-ROCK. With names like Cascade, Niagara, and High Sierra, M-ROCK's bags are designed for rough play and conditions. The company's

latest edition combines its Yellowstone, a large bag that can accommodate any digital SLR camera and features a weather jacket, rainflap, straps for your raincoat or tripod, and shoulder straps that allow the bag to be worn as a back—or chest-pack, with two smaller bags for your mini-cams and accessories—the Biscayne Bay and the Yosemite—attached. www.m-rock.com



M-ROCK Yosemite bag



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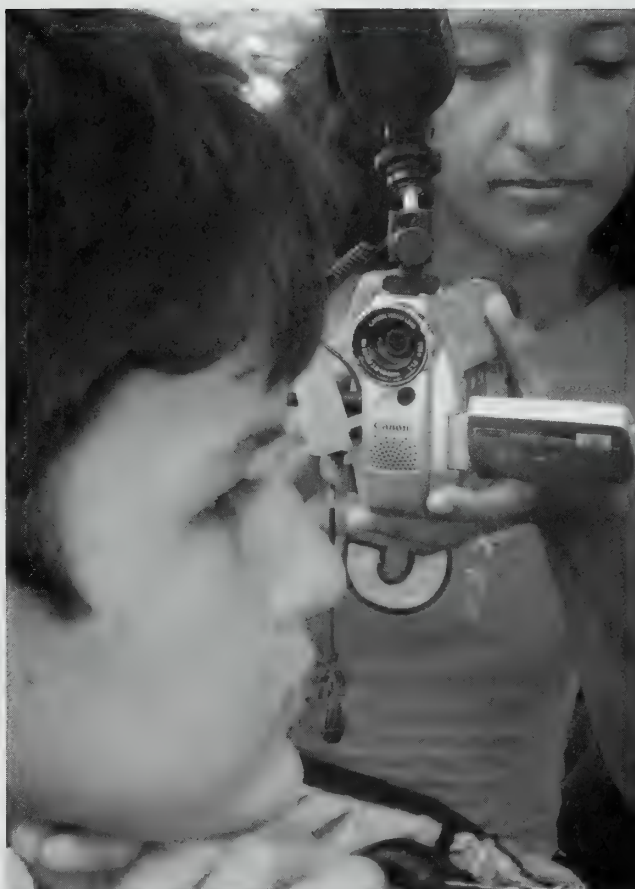
Convergence is great, allowing web designers to foray into filmmaking, photographers into web design, and just about any other move within the new media landscape you can imagine. But keeping all that software straight is enough to drive anyone mad. Hence Creative Suite, a new "design environment" from Adobe that consists of many of the company's most useful programs, such as Photoshop, InDesign, and Illustrator. The standard package includes six programs for \$899. And for an extra two, pony up: the premium suite runs \$1,199. www.adobe.com

Go, Go, Go!

Lightweight, handheld cameras availed a whole new world to filmmakers when they first hit the scene. Now, with laptops and wireless technology, the same can be said for the back-end: editing and production. Fronting this effort comes Incite RP, an editing software package from the Geneva-based Incite Avexco Corporation. Incite RP essentially turns any laptop (or desktop) into a complete DV production suite by streamlining all aspects of the digital production process into one mobile program. It is designed to keep pace with ever-advancing developments in HD and SD hardware and can expand to accommodate new file formats of MXF, XD CAM, and HDV. www.inciteonline.com ★

Faces of Change

By Michele Stephenson



Nara (here with Yuri) worked in Rio with black girls as young as 11 who found themselves pregnant and out of school for good (Michele Stephenson)

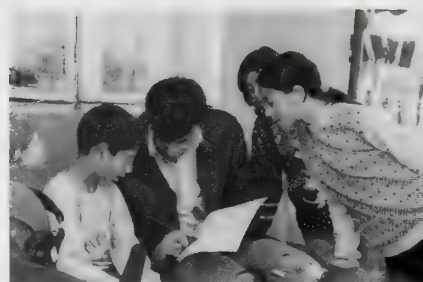
The concept was to bring five human rights activists from around the world to New York City for an intensive video workshop—each activist would receive their own camera. We would all brainstorm on what stories they wanted to tell about their communities and how to tell them. My task was to train the activists and later interweave their visual stories into a coherent feature-length documentary. It sounded simple enough. I had done video training workshops with grassroots activists in the past and had conducted them in different parts of the world. But prior field experience couldn't have prepared me for what was to come.

The participants on this international story were: an African American environmental activist; a Roma ("Gypsy") attorney from Bulgaria; an Afro-Brazilian teen counselor from Northeast Brazil; A Dalit ("Untouchable") activist from southern India; and an ex-slave from Mauritania, Africa. Production started in June 2001, and in a pre- 9/11 world, the visa process for getting them all here was smoother than expected. The major obstacle came from our Mauritanian partner,

An unpredictable convergence of human rights activists

Mohamed, who worked with an underground abolitionist movement freeing slaves and offering them better life opportunities. Because of the kind of work he did, Mohamed was extremely vigilant and at times seemed paranoid. The Mauritanian government had Mohamed and his colleagues under surveillance. We soon found out that Mohamed's plane ticket to New York City was being withheld at customs in Mauritania. He was convinced that his ticket was being purposely kept in order to stop him from attending the workshop. He almost didn't make it.

Stubborn as our team was, we did not allow Mohamed's initial absence to dissuade us. Unable to get through to Mohamed by phone, I must have gone five or six times to JFK airport to see if he had arrived. We hoped he had gotten his ticket in time for the workshop. But no such luck. His ticket was finally released



Activists at work: (top) Ivan in South America; (bottom) Nara in Brazil (Michele Stephenson)

from customs, but too late for him to get the chance to meet the other participants. He finally made it to New York, and I

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was able to conduct a one-on-one workshop with him that lasted over four days. By the time he returned home, his confidence was up and he was ready to roll.

The workshop also brought many unexpected revelations and connections. We started by sharing our personal experiences of discrimination and racism. Each of our stories was extremely poignant and moving, but the most revealing was that all were similar and somehow interconnected. Across the board it was obvious that our sense of self worth and entitlement had been tainted and partially shaped by the pressures of institutional discrimination and lack of opportunity. Could the camera help us become more whole, help us heal the psychological damage we had all suffered due to the pervasive nature of prejudice around our everyday lives? We had to wait and see.



Kathir filming in India: He interviewed victims of extreme caste violence (Michele Stephenson)

Whereas our personal stories connected us as human beings, it was also obvious that many of us had thrown our entire selves, for different reasons—some noble, some less noble—into huge institutional battles to improve members of our respective communities. It was obvious our partners were on the frontlines of the fight for equality in their countries, documenting atrocious living conditions and, in some cases, literally risking their lives. Kathir in India, for example, was busy interviewing victims of extreme

caste violence in village communities; whereas Nara, in Brazil, was working with black girls as young as 11 who found themselves pregnant and out of school for good. Mohamed was confronting government officials and conducting clandestine interviews with enslaved people. What had also become obvious at each arrival of a new tape was a greater sense of confidence from our partners, both in what they shot as well as in their message.

On the final phase of production I traveled to shoot our partners in their countries. The first stop: New Orleans. Then off to Bulgaria, Brazil, India and finally, Mauritania. Production took close to a year to complete. The most dramatically memorable moments occurred in Mauritania. Every aspect of my psychological makeup would be tested during that 10-day visit. Although

mind-blowing events occurred in every country, our misadventures in Mauritania are enough of a glimpse to give a sense of what we were all up against.

Before traveling to a muslim country like Mauritania with another woman and with a tourist visa, I had consulted with the underground Mauritania activists both in New York and Mauritania.

According to them, if I were to travel with a journalist visa I risked the possibility of having a government agent follow my every move. The problem was that since Mauritania gets little to no tourism, we had to have a cover. We had to obtain a visa to Mali to explain, if we were ever stopped, that we were visiting the region and were on our way to Mali, a more attractive tourist destination.

About a week before we were scheduled to leave, Mauritanian army officers attempted a coup to overthrow the presi-



The most dramatically memorable moments of production occurred in Mauritania (Michele Stephenson)

dent, Ahmed Taya. The attempted coup failed, but it left the capital city and the government on edge, searching every nook and cranny for potential dissidents. My executive producer suggested I cancel the trip. He was concerned for my safety and possible liability issues if something were to happen to our two-person crew. I consulted with Mohamed. He seemed very calm on the phone and explained that it would be safe for me to come. My DP was ready and eager to go. After much discussion with her and with my family, I made the decision to keep to the planned schedule. This project had to be finished, and any further delays would not guarantee that the country would be any safer later in the year.

In Mauritania's capital city, there were checkpoints at every street corner and identity papers were checked at every road leading out of the city. Our driver, Diaw, had to get out of his car to open his trunk for police checks at least 10 to 12 times a day. On our first meeting at the hotel,

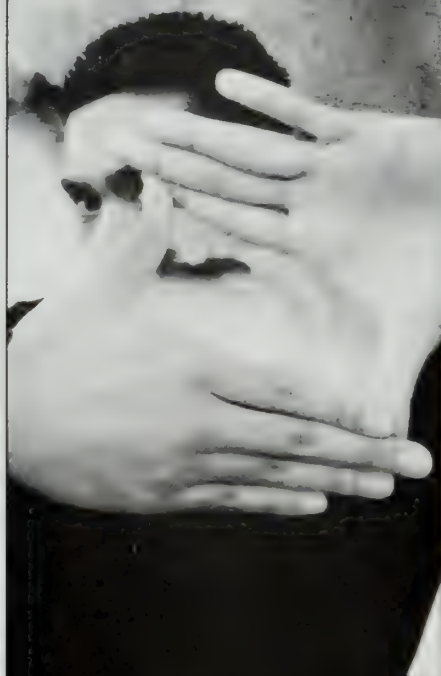
Mohamed instructed me that we could never be seen together. He had not prepared me for this in our email communications prior to my trip. We would have to drive to his house in the evening, hide the car and interview him and his family there. Since the workshop and because of Mohamed's use of the camera, he had acquired significant political clout within the abolitionist movement and within larger Mauritanian political circles. As a result, he was encouraged to run for mayor of his district, and he won the race. This new job meant his actions were under even more surveillance than before.

So, we devised a tape circulation system so the sensitive tapes we recorded would not stay in our possession and would immediately be sent to New York on a daily basis. We would, of course keep the beauty shots that were on tape with us so as not to blow our tourist cover in case we were searched. We would shoot during the day, make dubs of the tapes at night in our hotel rooms, stop by DHL in the morn-

ing, and send off the masters to our office in Harlem. The dubs would stay in Mohamed's home for safe keeping if for some reason the masters never made it to Harlem. Although time consuming, this system proved indispensable, because on two separate occasions our covers were almost blown.

The shooting restrictions severely limited what I had set out to capture prior to our trip. Our cover was almost blown on one occasion when we went to the more affluent neighborhoods of the capital city, Nouakchott to shoot, and were stopped by a light-skinned female Mauritanian pulling out of her driveway. She got out of her car and started to yell at my DP, demanding to confiscate the tape that was in the camera. I began pleading with her—in my mind there was no way I was going to give up that tape. We had a whole day's worth of work on it and could not return to some of the locations we had covered. At each resistance she became more hysterical.

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People had started to gather around us to find out what all the yelling and commotion was about.

Diaw tried to explain that we were simply tourists shooting various scenes of Nouakchott, that we meant no harm. She remained unconvinced and doggedly stubborn. She then insisted that we go with her to the home of her "private videographer" to erase the images from our tape. I agreed so long as we followed her in our car. She didn't go for that. We had to go in her car or no deal. In a split second, I had to make a decision: perhaps risk my life and get in the car with her—having no idea where I would end up—or give up the tape before more of a scandal broke out and the police arrived. I looked at her, sweat dripping from my brow and feeling queasy. Based on some gut feeling, I agreed to get in her car. All I could think was, I cannot give up this tape, there was too much hard work put into it, and we had come so far.

It turned out that her "personal videographer" worked on wedding shoots. He was in the midst of cutting an upper-class wedding when we showed up. My DP proceeded to erase the image of her home, the wedding man checked our tape, and

in less than five minutes, we were speeding away from that house as fast as we could. I later found out that the woman, the daughter of a deposed minister, was afraid the government would come after her and her family. Everyone in Mauritania, as it turned out, was on pins and needles, not knowing what to expect. So, in her eyes we were suspect too.

Back home the biggest challenge I had yet to face was to piece together these five eye-opening stories into a coherent narrative that retained the distinctive voice of each activist. Interestingly, the moments we shared while the camera was off accentuated the commonality of our experiences and transformed us in ways that are hard to translate onto the screen. Most importantly, and what was not lost to me or our partners, was that the process of passing on knowledge through the training and the filmmaking process itself were as valuable in effecting change as getting their stories out there to a larger audience. The human connections we made will stay with us much beyond the distribution life of the film. ★

**Faces of Change premiered at the Silver Docs Film Festival in June 2005.*

The German Mystique

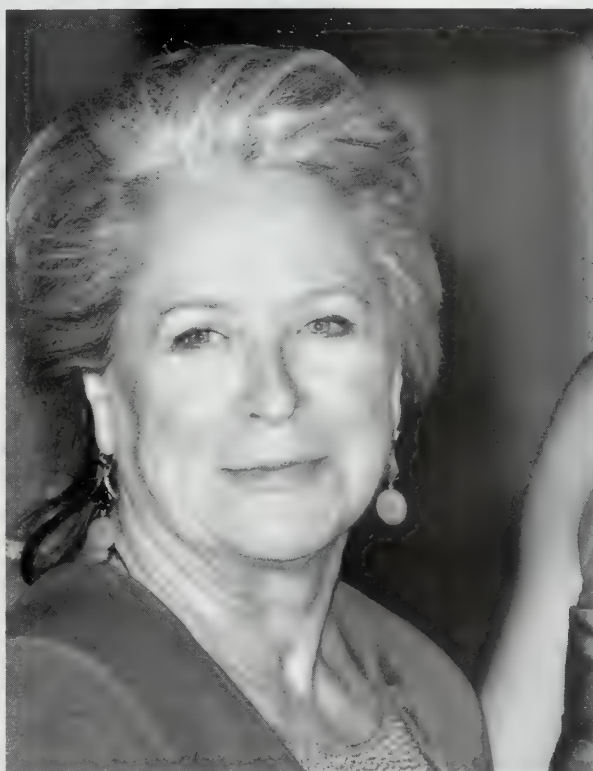
Margarethe von Trotta is not a feminist

By Sarah Coleman

Margarethe von Trotta doesn't want to be known for "always making films about women, women, women." But when her former husband, the renowned German director Volker Schlöndorff, came to her with the idea for her breakthrough 2003 movie *Rosenstrasse*, she couldn't resist—even though it was another movie that pits vibrant, courageous women against social and political forces that are hostile toward them.

For one thing, the story of *Rosenstrasse*—a week-long protest held in 1943 by Aryan women whose Jewish husbands were being imprisoned by the Nazis—had never been told. "Even in Berlin, the story was not known," von Trotta says in a phone interview from Munich, where the filmmaker was preparing for her next film. Hardly anyone knew that intermarried Jews had been spared from deportation until 1943 or that in that year, a group of determined non-Jewish women massed together against the Nazi machine and succeeded in breaking Hitler's will.

The story was undeniably strong, but telling it wouldn't prove easy. At the time when she was trying to raise funds for the movie, Germany was suddenly discovering its funny bone. "All the producers wanted to do comedies, and not very sophisticated ones," von Trotta says. When it came to the Holocaust, there was a feeling in Germany that "we don't want to hear about this time any more," she says. But von Trotta doggedly pursued the project for nine years—her own reluctance to make another female-centered movie melting away as she interviewed about a dozen survivors of the incident.



Margarethe von Trotta at the 2003 Venice Film Festival premiere of *Rosenstrasse* (Jeff Vespa/WireImage.com)

"These people were so fond of the idea, and they knew my other films, so they trusted me," she says, adding, "I always need a very personal motivation to do something."

That kind of careful research, along with an intensely personal connection to her subject matter, characterizes the oeuvre of Margarethe von Trotta. The lone woman in a bunch of talented directors to emerge as part of the New German Cinema movement in the 1970s, von Trotta has built a reputation as a boldly independent and—though she may hate the term—feminist filmmaker. Her best movies tell stories about strong women whose personal lives intersect with larger political forces and whose pluck leads them in unexpected directions. But these aren't one-dimensional, idealized Mother Courage types. Often dark, always complicated, von Trotta's women are anything but predictable.

Take, for example, Christa Klages, the heroine of her 1977 debut solo film *The Second Awakening of Christa Klages*. The screenplay, written by von Trotta, was inspired by a news story that swept Germany in the mid-1970s: that of Margit Czenki, a kindergarten teacher who robbed a bank to prevent her school from closing down. "She was treated in the newspapers like a criminal, but on the other hand I saw that she was so sympathetic, and she had such a good heart," says von Trotta, who then decided to visit Czenki in prison. The two corresponded until Czenki was released. Von Trotta later wrote a story, loosely based on Czenki's experience, that examines the effects of crime on the psyche. In *Christa*, she drew a powerful portrait of a woman whose good heart and fighting spirit prove to be a fatal combination.

The film is notable for another reason,



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too. True to her vision of female solidarity, the director gave Czenki a cameo in the movie and a job as its script supervisor. The ex-con went on to supervise scripts for von Trotta's next two movies before moving up to assistant director, and then directing two movies of her own—a rehabilitation that pleases her mentor immensely.

The Second Awakening of Christa Klages represented a career turning point for von Trotta as well. For over a decade she'd wanted to direct movies, but in the 1960s and early 70s, Germany's film industry was in decline. Like other Germans with artistic aspirations, von Trotta had gone to Paris after she graduated from high school in the early 1960s. She was supposed to be studying French literature and art history, but instead she was drawn to movie theaters. "My university was the cinema," she says.

And what cinema it was: Francois Truffaut, Ingmar Bergman, Alfred Hitchcock, and Claude Chabrol were all at the height of their careers. The French New Wave was in full force, with movies like Truffaut's *Jules and Jim* and Jean-Luc Godard's *Breathless* jolting audiences out of their comfort zones. Von Trotta gravitated to Bergman the most, attracted by the Swedish director's combination of artistry and psychological insight. The first Bergman film she ever saw was *The Seventh Seal*, and she remembers how its opening scene, with Death and the Chevalier playing chess on the beach, was "for me, absolutely a culture shock. Very mystical."

To satisfy her filmmaking lust von Trotta joined a student film collective, and then started acting. Things moved onto a fast track when she met Volker Schlöndorff, who also studied in Paris in the 1960s. The two married, and von Trotta wrote the scripts for several of Schlöndorff's films and became his assistant director before taking the helm in 1977 for *The Second Awakening of Christa Klages*.

What she learned in Paris, she says, was that cinema could aspire to the level of fine art—an important lesson for the daughter of a painter. (Von Trotta's father, Alfred Roloff, was a successful, married artist when he met Elisabeth von Trotta,

an aristocrat's daughter whose family had fled Moscow during the Russian Revolution.) "My mother always told me that she could never obey a man or be dependent on him, so even if my father hadn't been married, she would have stayed single," von Trotta says. Much of this director's empathy for women and her attraction to themes of female courage and friendship can be traced back to her independent-minded mother.

The von Trotta family was poor in fortune but rich in cultural appreciation. As a young girl, von Trotta tried to follow in her father's footsteps by painting, but she says, "I knew quickly that I had no talent." What she had a talent for was stirring up trouble. "My mother was called to my school many times, and the teachers told her I was too impertinent." Her mother promised to reprimand von Trotta, and then, once home, told her to carry on doing what she was doing. Von Trotta chuckles. "She said, 'Go on. Don't be too shy. Assert yourself.'"

A self-portrait of von Trotta in her feisty teenage years can be seen in *Marianne and Julianne*, her 1981 movie about two sisters who grapple with politics in very different ways. The two heroines are the daughters of a clergyman who grow up in the repressive atmosphere of the 1950s, longing to break out of their narrow world. The girls have opposite trajectories: Julianne, a fearless and brazen teenager, becomes a rather cautious reporter and pro-life activist, while the more timid Marianne grows into an uncompromising revolutionary who embraces violence by joining one of Germany's infamous terrorist groups of the 1970s.

At one point in the movie, when Julianne visits Marianne in prison, her face is superimposed upon her sister's in the glass that separates them from each other—an image that, von Trotta says, speaks to the complexity of human nature. "In many of my movies, it's as though these two women or three women could always be one." She credits Hitchcock as being the finest exploiter of this idea, though Bergman's *Persona* is clearly also an influence. "It's like a splitting-up of the self—you have



Lena, Ruth, Schles, and Goldi in *Rosenstrasse* (courtesy of IDP Film)

always a dark side and a light side."

Her current project, now in production in Germany, is a more literal version of that idea. It's about a woman with multiple personalities and will star Katja Riemann, who won a Best Actress award at the Venice Film Festival for her role in *Rosenstrasse*. The screenplay is by Peter Märthesheimer, who co-wrote several of Rainer Werner Fassbinder's most acclaimed movies and who died a year ago—"So now it becomes a sort of homage [to him]," von Trotta says.

Psychological complexity also comes to the fore in one of her other signature movies, the 1986 biopic *Rosa Luxemburg*. Luxemburg, known as "Red Rosa," had become almost mythical as a revolutionary Socialist of the early 1900s, and the question was how to turn a feminist political icon into a living, breathing human being. Von Trotta started by accessing the 2,500 letters of Luxemburg's that remained, then reading them five times without making notes. "I thought that after those five times, what I remembered about her would be the things that interested me, the points at which we came together." It turned out that what interested her was the intersection of Rosa's private and public lives. "She was a woman who wanted it all. She wanted to have children, to be a revolutionary, to be independent but also to be loved," von

Trotta says, noting that this was "the same thing that women wanted at the time when I made this film."

Another of her intensely political films, *The Promise* (1995), examines the effect of Germany's partition and reunification on two lovers separated by the Berlin Wall (the female character is, naturally, the more gutsy and stronger of the two). When the film was released at the Berlin Film Festival, von Trotta took some heat from people who felt she didn't have the right to make it, having lived in Italy for the previous six years. Actually, she says, being a relative outsider enabled her to take on such charged subject matter. "I thought that after the Wall came down, it would be a theme that many German filmmakers would jump on—but in fact, people who were inside Germany were so paralyzed by this new development that they feared to touch it. I came from the outside, so I had no fear."

Call her fearless, call her independent—but don't call her a feminist or political filmmaker. "It's a ghetto—too restrictive," she says of the terms. She prefers to think of her filmmaking as a combination of exhaling and inhaling. "When I'm exhaling I'm looking outside, at politics and history. When I'm inhaling, I'm doing personal themes," she says. For the organism to stay alive, both are essential. ★

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ASK

THE DOCUMENTARY DOCTOR

By Fernanda Rossi

Dear Doc Doctor:

I'm planning to make a documentary abroad. Am I better off bringing my own crew or hiring there?

Making films outside the United States is sometimes clouded by the enthusiasm of being able to mix work and pleasure in an exotic remote location. But gathering the right crew can determine the ratio of vacation to work you will experience, because the vacation will come to a sudden halt as soon as the camera plug doesn't match the socket in the wall.

I have found a pattern among the filmmakers I've consulted with who choose to film abroad: those who speak the local language, have visited often, or even lived where they are shooting are more likely to hire locally; and those who only relate to the place in terms of their film project, who are in turn more likely to bring an entire crew without pondering any alternative.

Working with a local crew has some great advantages. First of all, resident crews know the ins and outs of their geographical markets and will be more ready to deal with the everyday challenges. In terms of the budget, you not only save on



traveling and accommodations expenses for a crew you would bring from the States, but local crew wages abroad are often within an independent filmmaker's range (with the exception of Europe and Japan, of course), which allows you to be more generous with them.

And if you can stay for the edit, all the better—nothing can make up for an editor with full command of a language and the subtleties of communication within a culture. Finally, many governments have financial incentives for those hiring local key personnel.

However, if you and your producer are joined at the hip or you have a longstanding relationship with your DP, the thought of starting anew with a stranger whom you may not work with again may

seem completely unacceptable. Other times it's just not possible for whatever reason—maybe because your film needs to be shot in several different countries. But there are more than just production, financial, or practical reasons for encouraging at least a combined crew.

In the words of anthropologist and filmmaker Pegi Vail, who shot her film in numerous countries and was recently the curator of First Nations\First Features: A World Showcase of Indigenous Film and Media at the MoMA in New York: "We should also consider the relationship of the filmmaker to the communities within which they film, long after production has wrapped. Supporting filmmakers in developing nations with funds or production training to tell their own stories or to better position themselves for working with visiting producers can only enhance the experience of making a film abroad." So when you get on the plane back home, you didn't just take something, you also left something valuable behind.

Dear Doc Doctor:

My film is shot completely abroad and on a foreign issue. Does that make it a

foreign film even though I'm American? And how might that affect my future grant and festival applications?

In this ever shrinking global village of growing film budgets, country borders may be getting harder to determine, but they are never forgotten. Because as your question implied, qualifying for the "world cinema" slot can have significant and positive impact on the distribution of your film—it may also make it ineligible for certain domestic grants.

Grants, festivals, and everybody in the film business for that matter, abide by some flexible guidelines to determine what's foreign and what's American. Content is not the main one. Milton Tabbot, managing director of the documentary funding programs and screening series of the IFP says, "The Radziwill Documentary Fund is a development grant, so the only criteria in terms of qualifying as an American project is that the producer, director and/or production company be American or a legal American resident."

Things change, though, when other monies come into play. Milton contin-

ues, "The IFP Market, which for documentaries is also limited to American films, accepts shorts, works-in-progress, and completed films. In that case, we also take into account the percentage of domestic and foreign financing to determine whether they qualify as an American production."

Conversely, you can decide based on the above if you qualify for those grants and festivals that do have a "world cinema" slot or program. But don't be too hasty—if you are not a fully foreign production, there is no point in forcing the issue. For that matter the / (slash) has been created: US/Mexico, US/France, US/Indonesia. Co-productions are often a more accurate description and one that you should definitely try to explore if you worked abroad on an international issue.

A true co-production opens many possibilities and opportunities, with grants and festivals more willing to accommodate a solid co-production than a project with no clear boundaries. So, rather than sweating on which side of the border you should stand, become an ambassador, and strengthen those international relationships. ★



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In a Galaxy Far, Far



Away...

A festival in the world's most remote capital city

By Richard Sowada, founder & director, Revelation Film Festival, Perth, Australia

As I start writing this, I've just ejected from my VCR the 349th entry for this year's Revelation Perth International Film Festival and...well...it looks like I picked the wrong week to quit smoking.

I love programming the event. It's always fascinating to see how distance and borders melt under the influence of common themes. It's a powerful thing, and this year it's more noticeable than before.

There's no question that there's a dark streak running through the creative heart of the international independent sector—I've had this very conversation with a number of festival directors and curators many times lately. I like it though—there's a very real and deeply critical approach and a palpable sense of a personal quest. There's something very human and certainly political about the strong works at the moment, and for an event like Rev, that's something we've

always been connected to.

For me, Rev has been an intense journey. I'm not sure about other film festivals, but Rev is a work in progress. Eight years of Rev as Rev and a previous six years of working with a host of curated bar and club projects and cinema concepts as a distillation of the idea, introduced me to a world of film collectors, filmmakers, forbidden cinema and the wonderful world of microcinema—all bubbling just below the surface of mainstream cinema.

Although we made a serious move into cinemas in our third year, the microcinema is still at Rev's philosophical heart. Microcinema is where it's at and really where I see a revolutionary movement happening. It's real DIY exhibition and distribution with the added punch of a "total" experience. It embraces both artistic and commercial imperatives and is driven by single-minded motivation.

Rev's philosophy and approach is sim-

ple, and the background of the event is found in smoke-filled noisy bars and venues well outside of established film circuits and more accustomed to wild rock than celluloid.

As a part-time archivist with a decent collection of strange 16mm educational films, I believe a real film experience requires that old Bell and Howell whirring in the background, a small room packed with 60 people hungry for something new, booze, a great rock PA sound, pool balls cracking together somewhere in the distance, the occasional wafting of pot through the room, the sleazy house band cranking up in the corner between films, rare (and I mean rare) films from private collections and treasure-filled archives, and the spinning of my favorite records throughout an evening's entertainment. In this environment there's no distributors, no buy-'em-up and get-'em-out commercial exhibition dynamics—just fans on every

(All photos courtesy of Revelation Perth International Film Festival)

front. It's honest and raw, and it draws directly from the rich carny tradition of the great independent "roadshow" pioneers that have populated the darker corners of exhibition and distribution since film's earliest days.

There's a show, but also something deeper. There's an immediate connection with history—not only in being part of this "outlaw" fraternity of hit and run exhibitionists, but from handling great and often rare pieces of history. Audiences stand right next to you, watch with great interest, chat about movies as you thread the projector and make shadow rabbit heads on the screen while the end of the film flicks through. Hit the switch and the audience is delivered works made by Burroughs or Maysles or Meyer or Marker or Conner—often with prints five decades old. There's a direct connection to the tradition and a feeling of unpredictable discovery.

There's also a great tactile quality when working with films in such a direct way. Since Rev's inception eight years ago, 16mm film has all but gone the way of 8-track tapes. It's a real shame, especially when working with the older films that each has its own quality and character. They run through the projector differently each time—some are real thick, some brittle, some you have to really ride the sound, some stink with age and some have lost all their color. That's one of the great things, too: The film never stops changing, and all these qualities force you to pay attention to it from the moment you take it out of the can. You're forced to examine the physical and visual quality of the film itself. You've got to focus on its character, and once beyond the simple mechanics there's history flashing at 24 frames per second. Perhaps these deeper intricacies are not picked up on by the audience as strongly as by the curator, but I think the audience can sense the personality and respond actively to the archeological effort.


I take a great deal of inspiration from the "roadshow" pioneers and their understanding of psychology, love of everything about the industry, and total (dare I say obsessive) dedication to reaching audiences with the new and often the

taboo. And if nothing else, like my carny kin, I learned how to make a poster glue so strong (brown flour and a dash of caustic soda is the key) that there are still posters on the street that I'm sure will outlast me.

Since its exclusively 16mm microcinema foundations in the basement back room of a Perth jazz club eight years ago, Rev has grown to embrace all film and digital formats and screens now at five cinema and bar venues across town over 10 days to audiences totalling 10,000 annually. Our audiences continue to grow in an unforgiving exhibition environment and for 2005 we have introduced a screen conference focused on creative imperatives rather than commercial outcomes. For Australia, this is a major shift and one that receives considerable resistance in a disturbingly market-driven economy. There is no question Rev's approach is purist, but in an environment of creative compromise, this hard-nosed approach has served us well.

Australia, though, is not an easy place for screen culture, and if Australia isn't easy, Perth can be like carving granite with a screwdriver—especially when you're talking creativity over business. Perth is the world's most remote capital city. Isolated by two days drive to the nearest capital city there's a regular murmur amongst "middle Perth" as to the "evils of the East" (coast that is), and as a result Perth has developed a very protective, conservative community (we have a local film censorship act that can override that of the national censor to protect the delicate sensibilities of a family-oriented city). In addition, a national exhibition environment dominated by distribution interests that are directly at odds with independent screen culture makes for an interesting ride.

For Rev, these industry and social dynamics are a potent mix, one that the event seeks to shake. Toward this end, I tend to take a Columbo approach—you know, the bumbling detective—where the outward approach seems oddly random and perhaps slightly erratic, albeit strangely likable. Here, the event does its own thing. But underlying the exterior, analyzing the patterns of the industry



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from its early days is more than a part-time hobby for me. Without the significant resources available to the more established screen events, this is Rev's primary weapon. It's one I think allows it to grow and one that allows the event to more than just respond to developments, but be an active part of them. It enables Rev to read the works and sector and connects it to a much deeper industry context. The great works, the great advances, the great styles, and the great movements are born from looking deeply and applying or rejecting established intellectual principles. I like to think this is what Rev does in its business structure, and it's certainly what it actively does in its programming.

Moving beyond a simple point of exhibition and into this deeper territory is both the challenge and the strength of the festival. Where most film festivals seem to be increasingly dominated by distributors as launch pads for films (sometimes only days after fest screenings), Rev resolutely seeks to maintain its autonomy from this sector and as a result rarely screens works that are immediately recognizable to audiences—that is, films with secured distribution. For other events, I feel that while the distribution orientation may provide strong box office, it dilutes the event philosophy and continues to feed the status quo. For the audience, where is the discovery? The work is already discovered by the wider marketplace populated by business people and filtered through the “market vibe.”

I don't mind saying that I find the world of distribution (in Australia at least) enormously frustrating. With a couple of notable exceptions and much like TV, it's a backward-looking sector that tends to base its selections on past successes rather than the integrity of good new work. It waits for market affirmation rather than trust inherent quality. Rev attempts to deliberately spin this relationship around so as to work both within and without the established distribution and exhibition framework. It quite simply doesn't need (or want) the business of the business. It wants something more, and so do audiences. Our aim is to give it to them. And to eat lots of popcorn along the way. ★

Q&A

BAI LING

By Rebecca Carroll

I am somewhat embarrassed to say that I did not know exactly why I was to meet the actress Bai Ling at Playboy Enterprise headquarters to conduct our interview for this issue. Although somewhat less embarrassed to say that neither did I know she was in the final *Star Wars* installment, which opened in May amid shameless commercial promotion. I knew only that Bai Ling was in a small, quiet film called *The Beautiful Country*, which had just had its world premiere at the Tribeca Film Festival, and that this was, in part, the reason I wanted to interview her for *The Independent*.

I very quickly learned the reason we were at Playboy—Bai Ling had recently shot the cover for the magazine's June issue, and was, it appeared, happily obliging the part of *Playboy* covergirl with a shorter than short miniskirt and a loose-fitting jacket that scarcely covered her slight, bare chest underneath. She donned shiny, knee-length white boots, glittery eye shadow, and a neon lavender wig. Her diminutive face broadened with a wide smile as we shook hands, and she could not have been more gracious from beginning to end of our interview.

Since her appearance in the controversial 1997 film *Red Corner*, starring Richard Gere, Bai Ling has landed roles in a diverse collection of mainstream and independent fare—from Bertha Bay-Sa Pan's *Face* (2002) to Spike Lee's *She Hate Me* (2004) to Kerry Conran's flashy digital, green-screen send-up, *Sky Captain and the World of Tomorrow* (2004).

In *The Beautiful Country*, directed by Norwegian filmmaker Hans Petter Moland, Ling plays a character named



Bai Ling in Hollywood, 2004 (Jeff Vespa/WireImage.com)

Ling—Terrence Malick, a producer on the film, created the part for her—a fellow refugee in the Malaysian jail where the film's protagonist, Binh (played with soft and endearing angst by Damien Nguyen), ends up on his way to America, where he hopes to find his father.

Rebecca Carroll: *The Beautiful Country* is so gorgeously shot. It's a very quiet and gentle film, although I was struck by the boldness of your character, Ling. She has some sharp edges, too. How did you feel about her?

Bai Ling: Actually that character, and

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Bai Ling as Ling in *The Beautiful Country* (Roland Neveu/Sony Pictures Classics)

basically the entire film was a gift to me. When I first came to the states, Terrence Malick cast me for a play that was adapted from a Japanese movie, which never ended up happening. I remember first time I auditioned, I just learned English then—and Terrence Malick took me to another room and said: “Bai Ling, whatever you do, you’re just so truthful, we have to believe you.” And then he said, “Do not ever watch TV.” I remember that’s what he told me. I say OK. So we became friends, and later he said, “I’m writing something. I may have something for you.” It was *The Beautiful Country*—he wrote a role for me, a character called Ling. So I feel like it’s all a gift. Sometimes I feel like he’s the passenger sent from God or nature.

RC: How was it that you were in the states?

BL: I was invited by NYU Film School because I had already done some feature films in China—like leading roles. I was kind of getting bored because I could get all the leading roles I wanted there, but I wanted to see the world. And I always wanted to learn English. Actually, when I came to this country I was not necessari-

ly sure I was going to be an actress because it’s so difficult, and I didn’t even know English. I basically just jumped in.

RC: Did you know who Terrence Malick was?

BL: No. I had no clue. I had seen *Days of Heaven* and *Badlands*, but I had no idea how important he was. When we met, he was like, “Stay away from Hollywood!” He is a man who believes in art and is a very gentle, simple human being.

RC: Tell me about your experience working in both mainstream and independent films in America—do you have a preference?

BL: I appreciate both, because a Hollywood film for me is like a fantasy world—as an actress or a filmmaker, you have to experience that kind of fantasy and the long history of that dream world. Sometimes [when I’m on a studio film] I feel like a princess. What I like about independent films is that they basically keep you down to earth, because you know that a lot of people have devoted their life to this one film, not for money but for the art itself.

RC: So you don't think you have to do one or the other. Will you always do both do you think?

BL: I think not only both, but films in between independent and blockbuster. I've been lucky enough to do dramas and fiction and comedy—all kinds of things. I just finished a Hong Kong movie, my first one, called *Dumplings*. We worked so hard, I don't sleep for three days—we shoot in hot, hot, and hard conditions. But you know something I learned [is that] when you give freely you receive so much, so many gifts. Like that movie, just alone, won me four most important Asian acting awards. It's already out in Asia, and will be released by Lion's Gate here.

RC: You mentioned the history of the genre and the fantasy world it creates. That history, and our relationship with movies and movie stars in America are very specific to this country. What does it feel like to step into this world and become a young, hot star sort of overnight?

BL: I feel fortunate here. I think everyone in the world have their own mission, and own duty, and own gift that's special about them. So I'm lucky to find my gift and give the most of who I am through my film—for people to feel, to learn, and to love through all my characters. I often find myself in a controversial place—like being on the cover of *Playboy* [June issue]. It's beyond my wildest dreams. I'm from a Communist country. A Chinese girl comes to America and poses in *Playboy*? At first I say no, because in China everything related to sex is dirty. First time someone say to me, "Oh, you're sexy," I was so offended. Now I take it as a compliment. It's beautiful to be sexy—it's good.

RC: Did you feel that way in Spike Lee's *She Hate Me*, in which you play a lesbian sex bomb. What was that experience like?

BL: Spike Lee is extremely sensitive, like he doesn't tell us anything, but we know he's watching. One time I had this idea I want to talk to him about. And I was afraid of talking to him, but I said,

"Spike, I have some idea, can I share with you?" He said, "Shoot." So I told him the idea and he said, "Do it." I feel like he is the kind of filmmaker who is open to good artistic ideas.

RC: Your character in *Beautiful Country* is also highly sexed.

BL: After *Playboy*, I'm so much more comfortable. When we were first shooting the photo editor said, "We like your face, you're sexy, beautiful, but we don't know about your body, can we take a look?" I give a quick flash, and he said, "Oh you're beautiful." After two days, I'm running around naked.

RC: You live both in the States and China?

BL: I'm always traveling. I live in hotel rooms. This month I'm talking about *Star Wars*, I'm talking about *Beautiful Country*, and I'm talking about *Playboy*. And sometimes I say, "Where am I?"

RC: How does it feel different to promote a film like *Star Wars* and a film like *Beautiful Country*?

BL: *Beautiful Country* is so serious but beautiful—people like it when they see it, but it needs somebody to bring some attention to it, and I think I'm serving that purpose. I'm glad, because it's art and I want people to see art. Sometimes in show business [and more mainstream fare], whether I like it or not, I'm sort of the one to play the sexy role [during promotional junkets]—that's part of the job for me.

RC: So you approach acting as a job?

BL: No, I'm not acting. In all my films, I'm living in that moment, there's no acting involved. For me, if I'm eating, I'm eating—it's that simple. People don't know how simple it is. If I say I love you, I say I love you, there's nothing else involved. But you have to be truthful because the camera is like a mirror—it doesn't judge you, but whatever you give to it is captured.

RC: But what if you don't love the

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**Damien Nguyen as Binh and Bai Ling in *The Beautiful Country*
(Roland Neveu/Sony Pictures Classics)**

person whom you are telling you love—how do you suddenly love that person for a scene? Or you're eating and you're not hungry?

BL: I just feel I'm hungry and I need to eat whatever it is.

RC: That's acting though.

BL: That's not acting. That's how you call it, but for me if I'm drinking the coffee, I'm literally drinking the coffee. I'm not trying anything—audiences can see when you're trying.

RC: So is that instinct?

BL: You can't analyze it. Real life is real. I think actors take care of the emotional journey of a character, and emotions are like a wild river—no boundaries, and suddenly, you're sad, you're happy, there's a storm, the waters go up and down. It's a joy to feel that surprise of vulnerability. When a director says, "Are you ready?" I say, "I'm ready." I'm ready to be on set but I don't tell him I don't know what I'm going to do when I get there. I just go for it. I don't think about it.

RC: Your character in *Beautiful Country* is very willful, she chases a dream—how does her experience relate to your own?

BL: It makes me realize what dreams

are supposed to be and what dreams are real and where you find them. Maybe your dream is right next door to you or in your house with you and you don't have to go anywhere to find it. But people don't know, and so they take extra effort to find their dream.

RC: What is your dream?

BL: My dream is to appreciate every day—to smile and enjoy every day. For me life only exists in this moment. When I finish a film, that part of me is gone. And the future, I don't know, it doesn't belong to me. I don't know what's going to happen. I don't even have hope. I don't have plan.

RC: You don't have hope?

BL: I mean I don't hope for anything. I want the surprise and the gift to unfold, and that excites me. We all just have to firmly stand on our own journey, trust it, and go for it. And in the meantime, don't forget to enjoy the landscape. If there's a motel, I come in. If people dance, I dance. If there's beer, I drink beer. If I want to pee and there's no bathroom, I pee on the pavement. It is the journey of life, and it all exists in the moment. I love the work I do. It connects me to the world—and lets me feel I give something real. ★



Kenyan artist Ingrid Mwangi's video installations at HOTM Festival (courtesy New York African Film Festival, Inc.)

Hair of the Matter

The African Film Festival at Eyebeam

By Douglas Singleton

The New York African Film Festival (NYAFF) in collaboration with the Eyebeam Panorama screening series presented "The Hair of the Matter" in May. The night consisted of a screening of filmmaker Andrew Dosunmu's films, a video installation by Ingrid Mwangi, and a live installation performance of on-site African hair braiding with musical accompaniment by DJ Rich Medina. The films, installations and music combined to create an environment exploring styles, cultures, and issues pertinent to the African Diaspora.

In its twelfth year, the NYAFF showcases films from many African countries whose national cinemas are largely unknown to US audiences. This year's festival included a program drawing from the wealth of filmmaking looking to the rich tradition of African storytelling. It also featured Senegalese "Father of African cinema" Ousmane Sembene's critically acclaimed *Moolaadé*, as well as a short documentary, *Making of Moolaadé*, which the acclaimed director introduced.

Eyebeam's Panorama series provides a venue for international work innovative in form and content. "Hair of the Matter"

(HOTM) was programmed by Mahen Bonetti and is the first of the 2005 series focused on Africa (additional programs by Isolde Brielmaier and Tumelo Mosaka run later this year). HOTM resulted from NYAFF programmers' belief that the work of African digital artists had been shown at various venues but never together in such a way as to make apparent thematic connections between them and rarely venturing into the realm of experimental video and video art. The programmers assert, "...the discourse around digital technology in the mainstream film world seldom gets beyond common-place ideas about its portability and economy compared to celluloid film." In contrast, HOTM was curated to "raise such issues as the effect of digital communication technologies in creating and shaping an African Diaspora consciousness, showing how race and color are represented through digital technologies, the interplay between traditional and digital materials in African art, and exploring how ritual, rhythm, and oral traditions are transformed in the digital realm."

An artist of Kenyan origin residing in Germany, Ingrid Mwangi explores her biracial, multicultural heritage through

her videos, installations, performances, and photo works. Her video installation at HOTM consisted of two video screens running footage of a Negro woman and a Caucasian man, their backs turned to us. The videos display a methodical shearing of hair from both individual's heads, rhythmically in tandem. Once the woman's curly hair and the man's straight Caucasian hair have been shorn, the bald heads bear sculptural resemblance to one another. This recognition of similitude and cosmic brotherhood comes crashing down with a violent shake of the woman's head that restores full heads of hair to both individuals—only for the shearing process to repeat again, the video looping. Mwangi's video works document rooted patterns of behavior in hopes of exposing social, political, and cultural stigma.

Andrew Dosunmu's warm, expressionist short films were the night's highlight, suggesting an emerging talent. Nigerian born, Dosunmu began his career as a design assistant at Yves Saint Laurent. He worked as a creative director and photographer before directing commercials and music videos, eventually progressing to narrative filmmaking. The first of his films shown was *Kirk Krak!* (2001), a

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mélange of 16mm black and white footage shot during a voodoo ritual in New Orleans. Mysterious, stylish individuals float across the screen with an air of intense spirituality. In *Gitanes* (2000), shot in Dakar on Super 8, Dosunmu switches to color imagery to display Africans traversing an empty beach: mothers and children, a man strumming a guitar while youngsters dance. The title is an oblique reference to the French *Gitane* cigarettes. Both films employ street youths Dosunmu encountered through his travels and whose lives he felt should be chronicled, if only in a small way. In his fashion work, Dosunmu has photographed famous faces like Erykah Badu, Harry Belafonte, and Jimmy Cliff, and this skill at framing distinct, striking personalities is evident in his film work. The abstract, expressionistic imagery imparts an elegance, beauty, and spirituality to everyday life across the African Diaspora.

Included was the European cut of the haunting music video Dosunmu filmed for Youssou N'dour's international hit "Brima," *Youssou and Wyclef: Brima* (2002), about a beloved Senegalese griot king. Filmed throughout the streets of Johannesburg and featuring Wyclef Jean and a spirited MC Marie Antoinette (aka "Free") rhapsodizing about traditional griot culture, the camera swoops through the South African countryside, slums, and nightclubs. Many of Dosunmu's visual themes are evident: striking cinematography with beautiful outdoor scenery, interiors shot with vibrant colors, folks both celebrating and brooding and going about their everyday lives of joy and pain.

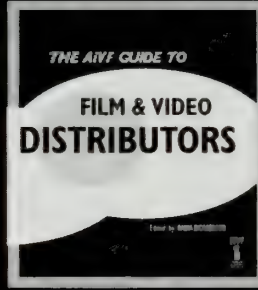
An excerpt from the acclaimed South African television series "Yizo Yizo (Episode 7)" (2004) followed. The Dosunmu-directed episode is shot in a manner reminiscent of Jim Jarmusch's *Stranger Than Paradise* with episodic jump cuts between disparate story lines. Dosunmu describes "Yizo Yizo" as a South African *City of God*—raw and controversial in its depiction of youths from small rural towns moving to Johannesburg in search of education and work—a "city of gold"—and instead finding a complex, dangerous metropolis.

Unemployment, crime, first sexual experiences, and the complex economics of the drug trade are its subject matter. "Yizo Yizo (Episode 7)" dramatizes the aspirations of two girlfriends intent on keeping to their studies while falling prey to the pitfalls of boyfriends and young love. One of the girls trains at a boxing gym in hopes of improving her circumstances, but when gangsters descend upon the gym demanding kickbacks from the owners, trouble is imminent. The episode concludes with the girls at a weekend hip-hop party. Dosunmu loves shooting scenes of spirited, picturesque dancing, often with sweaty bodies and low light in tight spaces. Featuring a number of South African dialects as well as English, and considerably popular across the African continent, its young actors celebrities, "Yizo Yizo" received an honorable mention at the Venice Film Festival.

The final screening was *Hot Irons* (2000), Dosunmu's FESPACO award-winning documentary about the fascinating world of African-American hair braiding salons and the heated hair designing competitions these spawn. Set in Detroit, self-proclaimed "hair capital of the world," *Hot Irons* explores an underground culture similar to tattooing or ballroom dancing subcultures. Economic decline brought on by the downsizing of the auto industry left many of Detroit's men without jobs who subsequently turned to hair dressing not only as a source of income but of renewed African-American cultural pride. It is an arena in which artistry rooted in African hair sculpturing has developed into a cultural phenomenon, its genesis the "hair relaxing" of the 60s Motown era.

Enthusiasts claim the African American hair dressing business as a billion-dollar industry, with epicenters not only in big cities like Detroit and Chicago but also in towns all over the south. *Hot Irons* shows a culture with its own magazines, radio tie-ins, juried competitions, and an economy firmly rooted in black traditions. Much of the hair work is astounding—sculptural, colorful, absurd, full of vibrancy and humor. The individuals who often spend a week's pay

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to have their hair "done up" take an intense pride in the originality of their hair styles, as do the hair artists who conceive and execute the designs. *Hot Irons* culminates in downtown Detroit's "Hair Wars" competition, an annual event resembling not only the notorious "Player's Ball" competitions but haute couture fashion runway shows. The conceptual wonders closing the competition include a three-foot tall "spaceship" hairdo and an astounding "butterfly" design of such heft it is a wonder the model can hold up her head. These and other designs are discussed with the aplomb of the most focused conceptual artists and to a large degree deserve such passionate consideration. Dosunmu films this world with elegiac compassion, shifting between black and white cinematography and utilizing a musical soundtrack composed of Johnny Cash, Motown, Nina Simone, and Jessye Norman hauntingly singing Strauss. A love of African American culture bleeds through the screen. Dosunmu's films are love paeans to cultures across the African Diaspora.

"Hair of the Matter" concluded with a live hair braiding installation performance by Balguissa Zoungrana and Mariam Simporé. Hailing from Burkina Faso, the two work out of a collective-owned shop in Harlem and have been braiding hair for 11 years. Their demonstration of African braiding traditions (all the rage in Japan) was accompanied by music provided by Rich Medina, a DJ and producer who uses decks to create musical collages of global Afrobeat sounds. Medina injects a social agenda about the need for universal change into the musical environments he crafts.

The "Hair of the Matter" program put on display a montage of styles and cultures and attempted to connect these social patterns as part of larger, cohesive world trends. While aiming to impart a sense of dignity to segments of the planet not always recognized as noble and beautiful, the work also suggests a desire to illuminate and confront the seemingly never-ending cycles of poverty, crime, and "otherness" these populations fall prey to, issues so pertinent to Africans everywhere. ★

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Room for *INPUT*

The annual conference is more dialogue than market

By Niall McKay

The International Public Television (INPUT) conference was hosted this year by Independent Television Service (ITVS). Held in a different country (and hosted by a different public media outlet) each year, INPUT serves public television executives and independent producers from around the planet through screenings and discussions about some of the most innovative and controversial programming being done today.

Flashmob: The Opera, from the BBC, featured a full-scale opera during commuter hours in Paddington, Britain's busiest railway station, and was a particular favorite among attendees. As was *Danes for Bush*, where two Danish comedians hit the campaign trail in support of the reelection of President Bush. On the controversial side, George Gittoe's *Soundtrack to War* about what kind of music US troops are listening to in Iraq provoked fervent conversation.

"Public Television often provides the kind of work that incites and excites conversation," said Orlando Bagwell, Ford Foundation's program officer for media, arts and culture. "The next stage is to engage that conversation and bring people into the room that have opposing points of view."

Following many shows, US delegates said that while they liked some of the international programming they would never be allowed to air it on US public TV—subject matter such as sex, religion, and politics often put certain works out of reach. *Lust*, a film about a Dutch sex worker who gets paid by social services to give mentally and physically handicapped



Jakob Boeskov and the mascot (inside is an illegal alien from Mexico) (Frederik Harsløff, The Danish Broadcasting Corporation)

clients a massage with a masturbatory, so-called happy ending would almost certainly be rejected by US public television stations. And it's also unlikely that members of Congress would take part in a game show and debating contest on the most emotive issues of day—whereas "The Pyramid," a show that features politicians debating each other in real time, with the audiences deciding the winner by calling in their votes, is very popular in Croatia.

It could be argued that US public television has developed a very narrow mission insofar as what it can present to its viewers [see Matt Dunne's Policy piece, page 54]. "Public Television in the US seems to be somewhat limited to documentary and performance art," said Clare Duignan, director of programs for Ireland's public service broadcaster RTE.

"We are of the view that if we don't attract a significant portion of our audience from the younger viewers, then we will become irrelevant very quickly."

Other shows worth mentioning are "bro'Town," a New Zealand animated series that pushed the limits of the politically incorrect to comedic effect; "Geography of Desire," a Chilean drama about four 30-something women that makes "Desperate Housewives" look tame and vacuous (which, of course, it is); *Hardwood*, Hubert Davis's movie about his father and former Harlem Globetrotter Mel Davis; and a German feature called *Pigs Will Fly*, a film set in Berlin and San Francisco about domestic abuse.

All very well and good, independent producers may argue, but why, apart from wiling away a few days watching TV, should they be interested in INPUT? "It's not a market nor a festival but it's something in between," said Claire Aguilar, director of programming for ITVS. "The business aspect has been kept out intentionally, but on the other hand we tried to create opportunities so that independent producers can talk openly to broadcasters."

It's a dialogue that will help independent producers become more aware of the kind of programming that broadcasters are looking for. "While it's not really considered the place for producers to pitch new ideas, it happens all the time because they are sitting elbow to elbow with broadcasters," Aguilar said.

ITVS recently announced its new international fund for which the organization is looking for pitches from international

producers on non-US topics. "In the race to the bottom, many US viewers interested in international issues are being neglected," Aguilar said. "On the one hand, there are fewer and fewer venues for international material. And on the other hand, we get a tremendous response when we screen a film like *A Wedding In Ramallah* on Independent Lens." Aguilar said that ITVS is looking for compelling stories from regions such as Africa, the Middle East, Asia, and particularly from Indonesia.

Independent producers not only get the chance to carry out international market research and watch what is considered to be leading edge films at INPUT, but also to meet many of the movers and shakers from the international programming community in an informal setting.

Rudy Buttignol, creative director of Network Programming of TV Ontario, was one of the many commissioning editors in attendance, along with Nick Fraser, editor of BBC's "Storyville" [see page 36]; Mette Hoffmann Meyer, commissioning editor of TV2 Denmark; Pat van Heerden, commissioning editor of SABC in South Africa; Lucas Schmidt commissioning editor for ZDF in Germany; Debbie Lee, commissioning editor of SBS in Australia; and Alan Collins, director of the Australian Broadcasting Corporation.

During one panel discussion on international co-production, Buttignol, Hoffmann Mayer, and Fraser said that they sometimes call each other and recommend a particular film. "It is not 'If Nick Fraser likes it, then I will like it,'" Buttignol said. "It's more 'If Nick Fraser likes it then I'll look at it.'" Later during the conference, Fraser told an audience that documentary director Eugene Jarecki (*The Trials of Henry Kissinger*, 2002) was standing in his living room when he pitched Fraser the idea for his latest film, *Why We Fight*, about the US Military Industrial Complex. So how does an independent producer/director get from the local café, where they're procrastinating writing the next proposal, to Nick Fraser's living room? Easy. All they need do is produce or direct an award-winning film. ★

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One of Stalin's skyscrapers in a "Storyville" episode about Russian history (Pavel Lounguine)

Nick Fraser's expanding empire

BY LISA SELIN DAVIS

Nick Fraser's career has been a constant battle between "what I will and won't do for television," says the 57-year-old series editor of the BBC's international documentary showcase "Storyville."

A kind of documentary filmmaking godfather, Fraser is able to fund dozens of films each year, but he's waged a war on media bias—whether that's what he sees as the politically-correct culture of the BBC or the far right wing media—to make it happen. "My views are out on a limb at the BBC because I'm prepared to tolerate freedom of expression," he says. He'll put any great documentary on the air, as long as it's not dogma, from either the left or the right. He sums it up this way: "I find that agitprop art I don't like."

Once a print journalist for publications like *The Sunday Times* of London and *The New York Times* and now a contributing editor to *Harper's*, Fraser's career focus has become solely to navigate the ideals he maintains for the print journalism world—an almost naive and hopeful vision of an empirical and unbiased press—and the reality of the small screen. His ultimate goal is to blend the two worlds as much as he can, unleashing the power of documentaries on as wide an audience as possible.

Sitting across from me at the Hudson Hotel in New York recently, Fraser had breezed into town for less than 36 hours—just long enough to have a peek at a documentary playing at the Tribeca Film Festival, and to pick up a pair of dark Levis ("We

can't get this color in London") and Banana Republic T-shirts for his daughter—before he jetted off to Toronto, San Francisco, Tokyo, and then back to Britain. And that was just one week. His job takes him around the globe, scouring for great films.

He seemed perfectly at home in the Philippe Starck-designed hotel with its tufted leather admiral armchairs and chartreuse sheaths of plexiglass—comfortable with incongruity. Wearing expensive-looking tortoiseshell eyeglasses, he has a ring of silver hair framing his handsome face, and the costume of the consummate film professional: a black blazer over lightly faded Levis, with shiny black dress shoes. He speaks with the accent of a British upper classman and has clearly never been a struggling artist himself. In fact, he's not terribly keen on talking about his personal past—just as he's not one to talk about his personal politics—or how he built the "Storyville" empire. "You want to know about that?" he asks doubtfully when I probe him for more personal details, although eventually he relents.

Born in London to a French mother and an English father, Fraser was educated at Eton and Oxford. After college, he came to America where he worked a series of what he calls "menial jobs in publishing" during the late 1960s. Eventually he became a freelance journalist, but when he returned to England in the early 1970s, print jobs were scarce. "I got into documentaries completely by accident," he says. "I got into television by accident. And whenever I was trying to quit working in television, there were never any jobs in newspapers."

He landed a position producing opinion pieces for the BBC—half-hour slots in which a single person sat staring at the camera, speaking his or her editorial straight into the lens. Crude, yes, even by standards in those earlier days of television, but Fraser says they were a hit, and they kept him tethered to the television world. "I was never really sure if I liked television at all, but it's kind of like a train you get on that you can never get off."

The author of four books, including a biography of Eva Peron and a book on the rise of neo-fascism in Europe, Fraser still writes, and he straddles his two worlds hoping that they'll edge closer and closer toward one another. "All my life I've written books," he says. "I think of myself more as a writer or as a print journalist, but in one of these moments when I was desperately trying to leave television, I got hired by Channel 4 as a commissioning editor."

"Storyville" began as a program called "Fine Cut," with

only four broadcast slots a year. With 10 times as many slots now, and an audience of more than 250,000 for each broadcast—an astounding number for a documentary show that airs on a relatively recently created digital channel—"Storyville" has become a phenomenon and a national cultural treasure in Britain. A third of the films are bought after they're finished, one third receive completion funds, and the other third get "Storyville" seed money to start things up.

"I don't have enough money" is my perpetual refrain," Fraser says. Still, he has enough to make a difference in the lives of many filmmakers, and without the BBC keeping too close a watch on him. "In television, if you don't cost too much, you have freedom," he says. It's because of this freedom that Fraser has transformed "Storyville," and he believes the name change (which came in 1997, after Mark Thompson became comptroller of the BBC, and shook things up a bit) had something to do with it. "[Fine Cut] felt arty in the wrong way, and really nobody understood it. They thought it had to do with butchers. They thought it had to do with some slice of beef or something like that."

With the name change came a new focus: story, not issue. Fraser wants the details laid out methodically. "What I liked about [the name] 'Storyville' is that it seems a name that's entirely neutral," he says. Neutrality—where the filmmaker's politics are put aside in favor of his or her desire to present a narrative—is what Fraser seeks in a film. He wants the filmmaker, in a way, to interfere as little as possible, and let the audience draw its own conclusions. He searches for documentaries that "teach you how to look at things as much as what to say about things." "Storyville" is usually impartial to politics, showing films that range from *Fashion Victim* (2001), an exploration



Eugene Jarecki's film *Why We Fight* was part of "Storyville" (BBC)



USA Airforce transport aircraft in *Why We Fight* (BBC)

of the murder of Gianni Versace, to *Final Solution* (2003), about the politics of hate in India, to the AIDS documentary *To Live Is Better Than to Die* (2002), by Weijun Chen.

Fraser decries activist filmmaking, just as he excoriates right wing corporate American media. "I always get the feeling that the right don't bother with documentaries because they own the channels," he says. But he would prefer Al Franken no more so than Rush Limbaugh. And he can go on at length about this activist film trend he so vehemently condemns. His near polemic might astonish some makers who believe that the documentary both can and should attempt to make social change; Fraser couldn't disagree more.

"I have a block about what are called 'social action documentaries,'" he says. "On the whole I don't share the politics, but more deeply than that, I don't think that making documentaries to inform people about social conditions is a very good idea. It's a kind of fantasy of filmmakers that it actually has an impact. I find there's a certain self-righteousness about the left-wing identity of documentary filmmakers. I feel they expect you to watch these things even if you don't like them: It's good for you to know about the Comandante, or it's good for you to know about grape pickers and all that."

In addition to eschewing social activist documentaries and Fox TV, Fraser is not particularly enamored with what he sees as a long documentary dry spell in the 1980s. "It was a blank spot, as far as I can see," he says. There were, of course, plenty of documentaries being produced in the 1980s and early 1990s, but the trend of the first-person documentary—*Sherman's March* (1986), say, or Marlon Riggs's *Tongues Untied* (1990)—is perhaps particularly distasteful to Fraser, who says he thinks of

himself as the cinematic equivalent of a *New Yorker* editor. He wants desperately to believe that empirical journalism still exists, and the personal journey film or the polemical documentary-as-social-tool or advocacy filmmaking, are antithetical to his ideas and ideals. As is "all the [Ken] Burns output, which never interested me too much, though I can see its qualities," he says.

"I'm generalizing rather, but I don't think [1980s documentaries] matched the journalism of the *New Yorker*. I don't think people were thinking about films in that ambitious way."

Listening to him, I can't help but think of the limitations of publications he's listed as beacons of empiricism—*Harper's* and the *New*

Yorker and *The New York Times*—despite the fact that I subscribe to all three. After all, the *New Yorker* endorsed John Kerry for president last year, dedicating space to several polemics against George Bush. The editors took sides. They took a stance, I told him. They temporarily forewent their objectivity.

Fraser, though, waved this away, explaining that there are times when a humanitarian cause outweighs personal politics. For instance, Fraser helped produce a video series called "Steps to the Future," about AIDS in Southern Africa, co-created by a number of NGOs and humanitarian groups to raise awareness about the subject. How, I asked him, was that different from a social activist documentary? "It was a form of agitprop," he admitted. "It was a form of social enlightenment, and I didn't mind that at all. I saw it as a terrifying global crisis, and I thought that was an emergency."

For all of the other non-emergency issues, the key to catching Fraser's eye is to have a great story more than an important political agenda. For instance, he finds the documentary *My Architect* (Nathaniel Kahn, 2003) to be exemplary documentary filmmaking. One might say that this film, about a boy's search to know his dead father through his architectural legacy, is the descendant of those 1980s personal documentaries he finds distasteful, but he doesn't see it that way. "It's a triumph," he says. "It's a brilliant piece of narrative, it tells you a lot that's interesting, and it's intensely personal at the same time."

The dawn of "Storyville" coincided with an explosion of amazing documentary films like *My Architect* coming out of America, along with a technological revolution that birthed the newly digital Channel 4, and, of course, the name change that encouraged a new audience to find documentaries accessible,

"I find that agitprop art I don't like."

—Nick Fraser



McLibel follows Helen Steel and Dave Morris struggling to defend themselves in the longest trial in English history (Spanner Films)

entertaining, and relevant. The films Fraser chooses for "Storyville" are often progeny of 1960s vérité greats, descendants of Wisemans and Pennebakers and Kopples. "When I took this gamble [of working for "Storyville"], it was actually that moment in America when people started to do really astonishing documentaries," he says. "I think you can mark it very easily; I think it's when *Hoop Dreams* arrived."

Hoop Dreams (1994), which allowed us to observe the lives of two young, black men who dreamed of escaping the ghetto through basketball, did not, of course, have a legislative or social agenda attached to it. It allowed a mass audience to enter a world previously sealed off to them. But one might argue that it was very much a social issue documentary, an exposé of poverty in America, and the power and lure of professional sports.

Fraser sees *Hoop Dreams* as merely a success that paved the way for other such films. "You have this real explosion of talent coming from America," Fraser says. "It's a period in American life where documentaries have taken over from a lot of other forms of expression. They're really the only original form of cultural innovation of our time, and the impact is comparable to what happened in American journalism in the 1960s," Fraser says, referring to the New Journalism of Tom Wolfe and Louis Lapham. And if it seems he romanticizes the movement, it's because he was a bit too young to experience it himself, and he longs for such a revolution to recur.

"The triumph of the American documentary coincides with the collapse of any pretense of seriousness of the American media," he says. "People have to find ways of expressing themselves, and they can't in most of the American media; the mainstream is shut to them."

Most interesting, he says, is that the current documentary revolution has come from a country where the arts are minimally supported by government. Although, he does concede that it may not be a coincidence. "Americans do have a special affinity for the process of making documentaries, some deep, compulsive empiricism that lends itself to making marvelous documentaries, some kind of literalism that makes them not want to let go of a subject until it's perfectly described."

While more than half of "Storyville" documentaries come from America, Fraser aims to include the whole world in its scope. He's in the midst of putting together a 10-part series on democracy, which will be shown around the globe. One film documents elections in China—that is, school elections for the best student, since there are no political elections. Another traces the political collapse of Papua New Guinea, from colonialism to democracy to chaos and back to colonialism in 20 years. The films will be shown in 22 countries—all over Europe and Asia, in America, select African countries, and, hopefully, on Arab television as well.

Fraser maintains his appreciation for documentary films as well as their makers. He has strong opinions, yes, but in the end he has a reverence for both the process and the product. "Another reason I like documentaries is that I couldn't make them. I do not have the patience. I get bored after two days...one day," he says. "[Filmmakers] are able to sort of wall off the world while they recreate their own world, and I just couldn't do that. I don't have the talent."

His talent, then, lies in spotting films that can draw large audiences and open minds...but not necessarily change them. "I wouldn't presume to effect change," he says. "If you supply people with the means to understand their world, that's a task in itself." ★



Kaya Taran (courtesy Ajit Bhaskaran)

Beyond Bollywood

The new, new Indian cinema

BY DAVID ALM

And there are so many stories to tell, too many, such an excess of intertwined lives events miracles places rumors, so dense a commingling of the improbable and mundane!

— Salman Rushdie, *Midnight's Children*

Bollywood films are known the world over for their eye-candy dance numbers, bubblegum pop songs, and epic run times. They're like McDonald's: Follow the recipe, please millions. They attract the rich, the poor, the young, the old, Muslims, Hindus—you name it. Usually in Hindi—the most common language in India, spoken by about 250 million people—they offer pure escapist fantasy for the masses: a sensory massage to rival Times Square, chock-full of beautiful people who never miss a step.

But taking Bollywood to mean Indian cinema is like assuming that no one in the United States outside of Hollywood ever picks up a camera. With over a billion people, 22 official languages, and hundreds of dialects, India has no singular identity. Yet it is commonly mistaken to have a singular cinema.

India produces more films than any other country in the world—around 800 features a year. And most of them are not from Bollywood (Bombay), or even the lesser-known commercial film centers like Andhra Pradesh, the home of “Tollywood”—or Telugu-language cinema. Instead, most Indian films are non-commercial, regional fare that address economic, political, and social problems, and run just 90–120 minutes. But their directors face a Sisyphean struggle to find distribution for their work, not to mention an audience. Add insurmountable language barriers, puritanical censorship laws, and the simple fact that until recently theaters had just four screening slots per day, intended for very long films, and you can see how Bollywood has become synonymous with Indian cinema.

India's “Indies”

“The term ‘independent cinema’ is not used in India,” says Vinay Lal, a cultural historian and film scholar at UCLA. “In

the US, of course, it means a film that's somehow outside the studio system, whereas in India you don't really speak of independent cinema, *per se*." Instead, you speak of "parallel" cinema—a term coined in the 1970s for non-commercial films that don't fit the Bollywood paradigm.

But the term is somewhat misleading: parallel cinema is not a monolithic category, and it hardly keeps pace with its commercial counterparts. Also dubbed "regional cinema," parallel films are typically in languages other than Hindi, such as Marathi, Sanskrit, or Bengali. Collectively, they reflect the India beyond Bollywood—or, as some have argued, the "true" India.

"[Parallel cinema] tends to be much less jingoistic, much less nationalistic [than Bollywood films]," Lal says. "And I think to some extent they grapple with what you might call the 'ground realities' of India. So they're going to look at the whole array of social problems that the popular film might not look at, such as the exportation of women in small villages or the relations between landlords and landless laborers." Lal quickly adds that class issues are not entirely absent from popular Hindi cinema. But because independent filmmakers are often rooted in the Marxist and socialist traditions of post-independence India, they are more likely to foreground such topics than Bollywood directors, for whom wide, commercial appeal is paramount.

"But I don't think that parallel cinema is necessarily better or more reflective of what's happening in India," Lal says. "It's quite clear to me that the popular cinema is able to access different kinds of social worlds and do it quite adequately."

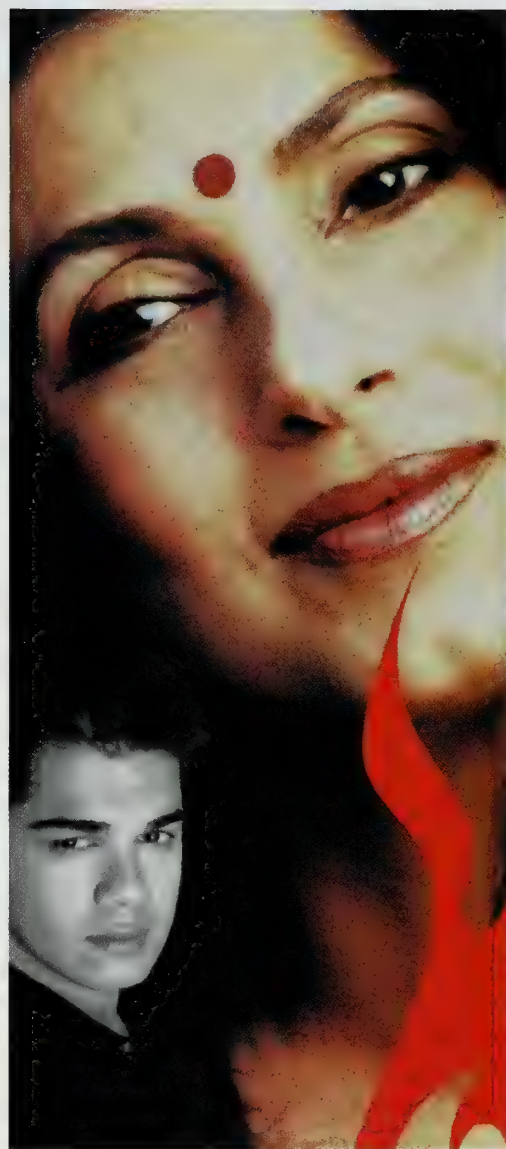
The difference is in degree, and in the tradition a given filmmaker—commercial or non—may be following.

Three Traditions

Shortly after India declared independence from Great Britain in 1947, three types of cinema began to emerge. Bollywood promptly became the preeminent Indian cinema, and its style was soon determined by the musical sequences, opulent settings, and high production values that still define the form today. And the films were always long—three hours on average—in order to provide a full evening's entertainment for poor audiences.

The second—"middle cinema"—were Hindi-language films that often featured Bollywood talent but were produced on relatively small budgets. These films targeted the same audience as commercial cinema, but they often broke the Bollywood mold and addressed social and political issues.

Finally, there was the so-called "art cinema," the least commercial of the three. These films often did well at festivals but had trouble at the box office. Indian auteurs of the 1950s and 1960s like Satyajit Ray, Ritwik Ghatak, and Mrinal Sen are still cited among the likes of Godard, Bergman, Fellini, and Hitchcock as masters of their medium. Today, Lal suggests, the "middle" and "art" cinemas have merged, establishing just two



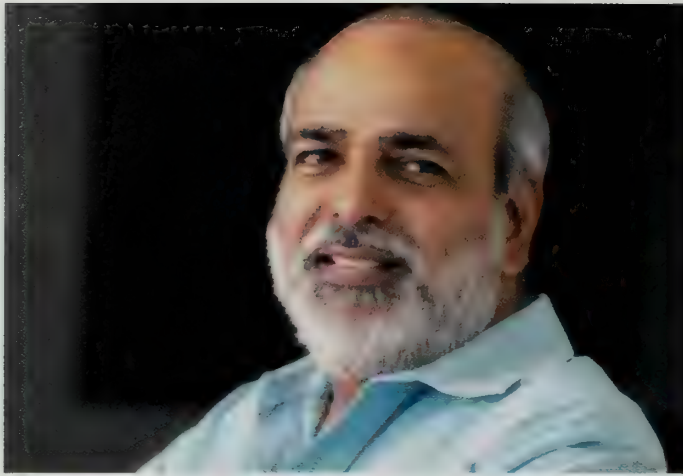
Leela embodies the conflation of Indian and American cinema (courtesy of Lemon Tree Films)

basic categories: Bollywood and parallel cinema. But some Indian filmmakers, perhaps for political or even marketing purposes, still identify themselves and their work according to the previous three rubrics.

Sashi Kumar, who released his debut feature, *Kaya Taran*, in Bombay and Delhi early this year, says that "middle cinema" still exists. "Increasingly it's called the crossover film," he says, "because you can keep crossing over to this side and that side, depending on where you are. But there are other filmmakers—and I like to think that I'm among them—who are in clear opposition to that kind of formula."

Recent Films

Kaya Taran's plot hinges on two religion-motivated genocides of the past 20 years: the anti-Sikh riots of 1984 in Delhi, which left about 3,000 dead, and the 2002 slaughter of 58 Hindus by



Sashi Kumar (courtesy Ajit Bhaskaran)

an alleged Muslim mob aboard a train in the northwest region of Gujarat. The latter spurred two months of retaliatory attacks that killed over 2,000 Muslims.

Kumar's film begins in the aftermath of Gujarat, with a young journalist whose research for an article about religious conversions takes him to a Catholic convent in Delhi. There, he meets a nun whom he recalls having saved him and his mother from anti-Sikh rioters 18 years earlier. *Kaya Taran* is a difficult film: Kumar weaves together elements of documentary, mystery, and personal history to create two narrative arcs that bear no apparent relation to each other until the film is almost over. Instead, the director requires viewers to piece it together themselves, engaging the audience in a way seldom found in commercial Indian cinema.

"I think that cinema of this kind cannot be subject to the laws of universal culture or mass consumption, or be directed by the tastes of consumers," Kumar says. "And I think that films like this are influential in many ways because they get people talking about issues, and they give [a director] the sense of having made some kind of impact."

Kumar's goal is to stop what he calls the "willful, collective amnesia" among people that follows such atrocities as those in his film. "With time, as memory gets erased, we exonerate the culpable," he says.

One of India's premier broadcast journalists for 25 years, Kumar funded and produced *Kaya Taran* himself for \$300,000. To appease censors, he had to display a disclaimer during the film's titles that identifies it as a work of fiction—though he emphatically refutes that claim in conversation. Still, he says the biggest hurdle was publicizing the film, a prohibitive cost for many independent filmmakers in India (indeed, anywhere).

Kaya Taran ran for 10 days in Delhi and one week in Bombay, at multiplexes in those cities. A burgeoning phenom-

enon across India, the multiplex provides unprecedented opportunities for non-commercial filmmakers to exhibit their work. With the addition of hundreds of new screens over the last five years, multiplex owners are willing to risk showing films that won't generate the proceeds of a Bollywood film. Indeed, Kumar's film attracted less than 25 people per night during its two runs.

The reason is simple, and a little ironic: *Kaya Taran* is a Hindi-language film, accessible to a quarter-billion people in India, and it screened in the country's largest two cities. But it failed at the box office because it was competing with the lighter, happier, more entertaining Bollywood fare also screening those nights. Meanwhile, an Assamese-language film from Assam, in the northeast corner of India, may have significant success in that region. In fact, if it became really popular, it could even be picked up by a Bombay studio and remade in Hindi.

"But if you're a Hindi filmmaker, making a film on a much smaller scale with a much smaller budget about progressive social values, [your work] more or less gets drowned out," Lal says. "So I think those films get less of a hearing, whereas regional films may get more of a hearing because their audiences are already more attuned to that kind of cinema."

On the other hand, Kumar says that screening a film like *Kaya Taran* in major, Hindi-speaking cities also maximizes an independent filmmaker's odds. "You have a bigger market, so you can have your film seen in many places at different times—and you're more likely to recoup your costs," he says.

Shonali Bose, an Indian filmmaker now based in Los Angeles who premiered her debut feature, *Amu*, at multiplexes in India last January, says: "I've had young people and college students come up to me and say they went to my film at a multiplex because they couldn't get tickets to the big film they'd meant to see. They said they expected to walk out after 15 minutes, that [my film] didn't sound like something they'd be interested in. But they just got hooked."

Like *Kaya Taran*, *Amu* focuses on a young protagonist—in this case an Indian woman now living in the United States—as she discovers how her own past coincides with the anti-Sikh riots of 1984. Also like *Kaya Taran*, *Amu* is part-mystery, but less difficult viewing than Kumar's film. "[Filmmakers like me] are taking different themes, but using narrative in a way that's accessible and can reach a wider audience," she says. "That way it's not just an intellectual cinema."

Kumar's film is not strictly intellectual, but it is more experimental in its form than *Amu*. And this was largely the point: "At heart I'm still a journalist," Kumar says. "But I'm also very frustrated with journalism. While journalism can deal with facts, facts don't mean a thing beyond a point. If you want to give a sense of the truth, you have to be an artist."

Amu also represents another strand of contemporary Indian cinema. Over the past five years, increasing numbers of non-resident Indians—or NRIs—in the United States, Canada, Australia,



Shonali Bose, an Indian filmmaker based in Los Angeles, premiered her debut feature, *Amu*, in India last January (courtesy of Jonai Productions)

and Great Britain have begun making films that specifically address the challenges they face in reconciling their two cultures into a coherent personal identity. Such films are often set outside of India and feature westernized characters as they struggle with, or discover their Indian heritage for the first time.

One such film, *Leela* (2002), tells the story of an Indian woman who breaks Indian customs when she leaves her husband and moves to the United States to teach at an American university. There, she develops a close bond with one of her male students, an Indian-American who is wrestling with his own cultural identity. "It's kind of a *Graduate* meets *Summer of '42*," says the film's producer, Kavita Munjal.

Unlike *Kaya Taran* and *Amu*, *Leela* used Bollywood stars, but Munjal and the film's director, Somnath Sen, sought funding themselves and shot the film in just 25 days—all but one in Los Angeles. In form, too, *Leela* embodies this conflation of Indian and American cinema. "*Leela* was really a marriage of western forms, in terms of storytelling, using the three-act structure, with the Indian way of telling stories," Munjal says. "There's a lot of music and dance."

The latter quality garnered the film a lot of attention in India during its 15-week run, but the former disqualified it at awards ceremonies. "We used a top-level Indian cast, it had songs and

dances, and we shot in India for one day. But all of our financing was US-based, and our production company was based in the US, so we were considered a foreign film," Munjal says—specifically, an American film. "But I think that more than American or Indian, I just view it as world cinema."

Films like *Leela* also reflect a growing frustration with Bollywood's treatment of the NRI experience. "If Bollywood makes a film about NRIs, it's about the rich NRIs," says Bose. "There's no reflection of the struggles they face here, or of what's happening in the rest of American society. It's just glamorized." They also tend to reflect antiquated social customs, traditional family values, and conservative politics, further capitalizing on the nostalgia among certain NRIs for a motherland that no longer exists. And they altogether ignore the NRI experience in third-world countries like Trinidad, South Africa, and Fiji—all of which have large populations of Indian émigrés.

But the films and filmmakers discussed above represent a new Indian cinema, one that departs from such rose-colored fictions.

"And this new kind of auteurship is not to be underestimated," Kumar says. "Young people all over India are taking their cameras and shooting their stories and expressing their concerns. And this is gathering as one huge oppositional form of art to the bigger, Bollywood narrative that has been developing for decades." ★

once upon a time in MEXICO



Pedro Araneda founded the Mexican Association of Independent Filmmakers (courtesy AMCI)

The next chapter in cinema

BY VICTOR PAYAN

The Mexican film community has always prided itself on a certain international nationalism highlighted by collaborations with world class cinematic mavericks such as Luis Buñuel, Sam Peckinpah, and Alejandro Jodorowsky. In recent years, film renegades such as John Sayles and Peter Weir have headed south of the border to realize their visions, and the Mexican New Wave that began in the early 90s with films like Maria Novaro's *Danzón* and Alfonso Arau's *Like Water for Chocolate*, proved that native talent could hold its own on the international arthouse and festival circuits.

But there's a new Mexican revolution happening that started like a shot heard 'round the world with Alejandro Gonzalez Iñárritu's 2000 debut film *Amores Perros*, a multiple narrative feature that threw audiences relentlessly into the chaotic complexity and the limitless labyrinth of the contemporary Mexican experience. Like their predecessors in the 1990s, the

films of the new revolution stand firmly in a Mexican cinematic tradition characterized in equal parts by a rebellious iconoclasm, a keen political awareness, an intimate examination of gender relations, a profound distrust of both church and state, a romantic populism, and last but not least, a savagely honest and absurdist sense of humor. And with Mexico's traditional censorship a thing of the past, today's directors operate with a degree of freedom that is changing the way we look at cinema.

The critical and commercial success of films like *Amores Perros* and Alfonso Cuarón's *Y Tu Mama También* the following year, catapulted Mexican films onto US video shelves and sparked a reversal of the decade-long exodus to Hollywood of native talents such as directors Alfonso Arau, Guillermo del Toro, Luis Mandoki, and cinematographers Rodrigo Prieto and Emmanuel Lubezki.

Although at the same time edgy Mexican films were earning accolades at international festivals and box offices, the revolu-

tion faced some serious threats. For one thing, domestic production during the last decade dropped significantly. According to figures released by the Mexican Senate in 2004, 212 films were made in Mexico over the last 10 years, compared to 747 in the previous decade. And in 2002, while Mexican director Carlos Carrera's *El Crimen del Padre Amaro* was causing an international sensation, Mexican president Vicente Fox proposed a sell-off of the Mexican Film Institute IMCINE and the national film studio Churubusco. This looming privatization struck at the heart of Mexico's cinematic and cultural identity, as IMCINE is a repository for the masterworks of Mexico's Golden Age, and Churubusco is where many of them were filmed.

Public outcry and a demonstration at the Mexican parliament building by the cultural community ultimately prevented the sell-off, but the threat succeeded in galvanizing Mexican filmmakers' sense of purpose. With 80 percent of Mexican movie screens already dominated by Hollywood films, they were not about to give up ground or open the door to American-style action films and a return to the shoot-em-up Mexploitation ficheras that proliferated during the 80s.

Actress Vanessa Bauche, who starred as the abused wife Susana in *Amores Perros* and is one of the most familiar faces in Mexican cinema, is adamant about the potential of today's film generation. She says that the lack of money available for production forces filmmakers in Mexico to become de facto auteurs. "Out of 10 films, five compete in international competitions and two or three do well at the box office, and that's a very high percentage for the amount of films that are produced," Bauche says.

As to what qualities Mexican filmmakers have to contribute to the international independent film community, Bauche is very positive. "I think the grasp, the guts, the heart," she says. "[There are] films that are made with all the resources, but that don't have this spirit, which is one of struggle, of will, of survival."

Bauche's own current projects highlight the diversity of today's Mexican film community. She is starring in Gustavo Loza's contemporary emigration film *Al otro lado* (not to be confused with Natalia Almada's 2005 documentary with the same name), Felipe Cazals's period piece *Las vueltas de citrillo*, and Tommy Lee Jones's directorial debut *The Three Burials of Melquiades Estrada*. Written by *Amores Perros* screenwriter Guillermo Arriaga, *Three Burials* won the Best Screenplay award for Arriaga and Best Actor award for Tommy Lee Jones at Cannes in May.

Multitalented filmmaker Sergio Arau, director of the smart

mockumentary *A Day without a Mexican*, is one artist who left the capital during the slump of the 1990s. An accomplished cartoonist and musician, Arau grew up around the avant garde Mexico City film community of the 1960s, which included his father, actor/director Alfonso Arau and Chilean transplant Alejandro Jodorowsky. Early in his career, the younger Arau worked with each—first as assistant director on his father's popular 1979 comedy *Mojado Power!*, then as the tattoo designer for Jodorowsky's 1989 cult classic *Santa Sangre*.

Arau says he learned valuable lessons from this kamikaze community of counterculture cineastes, mimes, and street theater artists. "I have an obsession with seeking out original ways of saying things," Arau says. "I improvise a lot. You have the script, but the script is just a guide. Sometimes it pays off, and sometimes it's horrible. But that's a part of the risk."

After studying film at the CUEC, Arau relocated to southern California in the 1990s. It was there he produced both his 1998 animated short *El Muro* and the short version of *A Day without a Mexican* with his wife, performance artist and actress Yareli Arizmendi. As a short, *A Day Without a Mexican* fast became an underground phenomenon, positing the scenario of what would happen to the California economy if all the Mexicans disappeared.

Playing with documentary

and TV news forms, this inventive short uses comedy to skewer the rising anti-immigrant sentiment in the United States. When popular demand prompted him to develop the concept into a feature film, Arau sought Hollywood backing. Initially, potential funders asked Arau to dumb it down and make it less political. He wasn't interested.

Financing was finally secured with investors from Mexico and Spain buying into Arau's offbeat English-language film targeted at the US market. The investment paid off, as the film resonated with audiences on both sides of the border. Despite its limited release, *A Day without a Mexican* surpassed the box office draw of many Hollywood films in Mexico, ultimately earning \$5.9 million at the box office. In its first three months on DVD, the film sold more than 700,000 copies and grossed more than \$12 million in rentals.

Arau says his film also received a show of support from an unlikely source: video pirates. "They sent us many messages saying that because the film was so wonderful for our people, they wouldn't make bootlegs until the film ended its theatrical run," Arau says. "And the same thing happened in Mexico. They respected us."



Omar and Andres are filmmakers in Baja (courtesy AMCI)



Cuarto Hotel (courtesy of Pedro Araneda/AMCI)

Since the end of the film's box office run, there have been numerous bootlegs, which Arau regards with an admirable sense of humor. "I have four versions from Mexico and two from the US," he says. "And I have a friend who bought one in Cambodia. I was very honored, because it was the only Mexican movie to be pirated in Cambodia."

Another filmmaker who is working outside of the capital is Beto Gomez, the fresh-faced director of the stylish border boxing movie *Puños rosas*. Gomez lives in Guadalajara, the home of one of Mexico's pre-eminent film festivals. His film, which is set in the Matamoros/Brownsville border region, examines the often-slippery definition of Mexican masculinity on the streets and in prison. His latest project, a documentary on female Mexican singers called *Hasta el último trago, corazón...!* features interviews with Lila Downs, Astrid Hadad, Chayito Valdez, and Chavela Vargas.

Hailing from the northern state of Sinaloa, Gomez studied film in Guadalajara, Boston, and Vancouver. Returning to Mexico to work in television, Gomez found the Mexico City film community a bit elitist. As an outsider to the film establishment with no institutional connections, Gomez looked for an alternative route to achieving his goal. "I preferred to forget

about all the things I was never going to have, and with the few tools that I (did have), to make movies."

Gomez embarked on a trip to Spain where he said his encounters with the film community inspired him to rethink the role of the filmmaker as a more communal artist. Coming home to Mexico, Gomez began working on his first film, *El Agujero* (*The Hole*), a narrative feature about a migrant worker who returns to his village after many years in the United States. For his lead, Gomez sought out famed Mexican actor Roberto Cobo, best known for his role as El Jaibo in Luis Buñuel's 1950 classic *Los Olvidados*. Cobo said yes, and after a 12-day shoot, the film ultimately premiered at the San Sebastian Film Festival in 1997.

Gomez says the elitism he witnessed in the 90s has since given way to a more collaborative, egalitarian ethos, with filmmakers seeing themselves as a community of cultural creatives and fine artisans rather than film stars and industry big shots. "There are very few films made in Mexico, but there's a tremendous passion," he says. "There are interesting stories. And despite all the problems in the government or with the economy, the true Mexican filmmaker will continue filming despite wind or flood."

The decentralization of film production from the capital and the development of regional voices is exactly the kind of move-

ment that NYU graduate Pedro Araneda is working to develop.

In 1993, Araneda founded AMCI, the Mexican Association of Independent Filmmakers. Today AMCI boasts over 1,100 members and its film school, Universidad del Cine, has campuses in Mexico City, Monterrey and Guadalajara. Araneda says the combined realities of low wages and traditional lack of institutional support outside of Mexico City drive the inventiveness of Mexican filmmakers. "Since it's more difficult for us to shoot," Araneda says. "When we have a camera, it's like the opportunity to enter a temple where we can create."

AMCI helps filmmakers with production resources and has even produced a few projects, including a feature-length compilation of independent shorts by regional filmmakers called *Accion en Movimiento, Toma 1*. The compilation premiered at AMCI's first film festival, *Accion en Movimiento*, which took place earlier this year in Monterrey.

Araneda believes that the Mexican film industry is healthy, but is also vulnerable in many areas. President Fox's proposed sell-off of IMCINE and Churubusco gave Mexican filmmakers a harsh wakeup call as to how precarious their film infrastructure really is. Araneda stresses the need to develop more public-private collaborations, encourage US-Mexico co-productions, and to foster more Mexican producers. "There's tons of great screenwriters, tons of great directors, but right now, for example, the aim of Universidad del Cine, is to create producers, because the producer is the machine that is going to create the industry," he says.

The job of the Mexican producer has been given a boost with the establishment of FIDECINE, a federal program that provides up to 49 percent of a Mexican film's production cost through soft monies. Some recent films that have received support from FIDECINE include *Japon* (2002), *Temporada de patos* (2004), *A Day without a Mexican* (2004) and Gabriel Retes's fanciful festival spoof *@Festivbercine.ron* (2004). And earlier this year, a new three percent tax incentive for local production went into effect.

Araneda recently visited the bustling border city of Tijuana to take part in the first annual Baja California Film, Television and Video Festival. The event was co-presented by the Tijuana Cultural Center and Fox Studios Baja, where James Cameron's 1997 blockbuster *Titanic* was filmed. Since its creation as a self-contained state-of-the-art production facility in the mid-90s, Fox Studio Baja has brought a steady stream of big budget Hollywood films to the region, including *Tomorrow Never Dies* (1997), *Pearl Harbor* (2001), and *Master and Commander* (2003). These films utilize a significant number of Mexican industry professionals, most coming from Mexico City. But to get to the toll road that leads you to the sunny seaside studio, you must first pass through Tijuana.

Tijuana, nicknamed the "City of Future," is home to Homeland Security showdowns and low-cost prescription medication. It is also home to the emerging Border Wave movement. Experimental videomaker Aaron Soto is the spokesperson for the group, which was informally recognized for the first time in 2004 at the 2nd Annual Morelia International Film Festival in Michoacan. The festival, which celebrates international film while also showcasing filmmakers from Michoacan, featured a



Pedro Araneda on set (courtesy AMCI)

Mexican-American conference on independent film and video.

Soto and his video short, *33 1/2*, which was characterized by the festival jury as being "outside of any category," are emblematic of the work being produced by Tijuana's young experimental Wild Bunch. "The cultural push of the foreigner wants to sell us our own image as if it were some tourist video," Soto says. "In Tijuana we're very aware of that. I always say that in Tijuana, we have the best seat in the house, because we can turn to see how the Americans are trying to con us, and we can turn to see how the Mexicans are trying to con us."

The proximity to San Diego has also opened up a world of technology, equipment and assistance that had been lacking. "We bring it to Mexico first, through San Diego, long before it gets to the film schools in the capital," Soto says. "And that wasn't so before. And that's why I think that Tijuana is one of the cities that will figure prominently in the future of art and cinema. Something important is happening here. This is the perfect bridge for creating cinema between both nations."

The future promises continued hope for Mexican cinema, with new works on the horizon by directors such as Jaime Humberto Hermosillo, Guillermo del Toro, Marisa Sistach, Maria Novaro, and Carlos Bolado. *Amores Perros* team Alejandro Gonzalez Inarritu and Guillermo Arriaga were at Cannes in May shopping around their latest project, *Babel*, which stars Gael Garcia Bernal, Brad Pitt, and Cate Blanchett.

With the term Mexican New Wave not so new anymore, it is time to examine the sustained efforts of a creative community to continue producing challenging, innovative and award-winning work. Hard fought gains in freedom of expression and an international reputation built over the last 15 years have given Mexican filmmakers a sense of identity and purpose that maintains the core values of their film heritage while adding new voices to the global, social, and political dialogue. Additionally, this community is making use of new developments in infrastructure, distributing, financing and technology that did not exist in 1992. Branching into the borderlands and already making incursions into the US independent film community, it is a movement that can make revolutionaries of us all. ★

Foreign Film Distributors



Electric Shadows is part of First Run Features's Asia Society collaboration (FRF)

A roundup from full-service to start-up

BY MARGARET COBLE

In America's independent foreign film market, different distributors have different things to offer, depending on their size, specialty areas, experience, and level of commitment to the foreign genre. For this issue, we talked to a random sampling of American independent film distributors—from larger full service companies to newer start-ups—about their involvement with foreign film and their thoughts on the temperature of the independent foreign market today.

First Run Features

Founded in 1979 by a collective of filmmakers unafraid to take risks with independent film, New York's First Run Features is known for its extensive catalog of left-leaning political, social, and humanitarian issue films, and from the beginning it has had a

strong interest in unique foreign titles and emerging foreign filmmakers. Run by Seymour Wishman for the past 20 years, First Run has stayed true to its indie roots. And despite combining its non-theatrical educational division with Icarus Films (to form First Run/Icarus Films) in 1987, it remains mid-sized, employing a staff of just 20 between the two divisions. Its theatrical reach, though, (12–15 films per year), home (up to 50 videos/DVDs annually), and non-theatrical (via First Run/Icarus Films' catalog of 700 titles) is formidable, positioning FRF as one of the leading indie distributors in the United States.

In recent years, FRF has distinguished its devotion to world cinema through notable theatrical acquisitions—like their current releases *Torremolinos 73*, a Spanish comedy, and *Le Grand Role*, a French-Jewish comedy—and by forging several new part-



Mango Yellow from the Global Lens Collection (First Run Features)

nerships and launching several new international series.

Additional acquisitions from this year's festival circuit include the German films *Go For Zucker* and *Agnes and His Brothers*.

"*Go For Zucker* is an interesting one to speak of, as it's one of the first, if not the first, German comedy made about Jewish culture and life," says FRF's Director of Business Affairs Cleo Godsey. "We have a strong collection of Jewish interest films and so that fits nicely in that collection."

More prominently, First Run has joined forces with The Global Film Initiative, a New York-based, nonprofit foundation whose mission is to promote cross-cultural understanding through cinema. GFI tours 10 narrative films from the developing world each year via leading cultural institutions in 14 US cities, and First Run has signed on to be the exclusive North American commercial distributor of these films to the home video, theatrical/semi-theatrical, and television markets. The DVD series, called the Global Lens Collection, launched in the first quarter of 2005 with the Brazilian film *Mango Yellow* and Algerian title *Rachida*.

"These films have been overlooked by even distributors our size because they are challenging, artistically or content-wise," Godsey says of the Global Lens Collection. "They will not obviously garner a big or even decent sized box office as a foreign release. So it fit with our profile to work with them. We've always supported foreign films that are more challenging, films that give some kind of look at the culture from a different angle and aren't just entertainment driven."

FRF also has an alliance with Human Rights Watch, which launched in May 2004 with the film *S21: The Khmer Rouge Killing Machine*, to spotlight various FRF titles that deal with

human rights issues. These include both theatrical releases and a DVD series that features bonus material from HRW related to the film's country or subject matter. FRF is also the exclusive home video distributor for the DEFA (Deutsche Film Aktiengesellschaft) Collection, a diverse body of films from the state-run studio of the former German Democratic Republic (East Germany). And their newest collaboration is with the Asia Society in New York to release Chinese films theatrically, on home video and television. That series will launch with *Electric Shadows*, the feature debut by Chinese filmmaker Xiao Jiang.

"In terms of business, it's a nice niche in the American marketplace to have smart foreign films," Godsey says. "The foreign film market is growing in some areas, but it's still a challenge theatrically and still a challenge on television. But in home video, and via the internet, there's been a growth. It's harder for theaters to have long runs of these kind of films and hard for television to justify their economic model with films that no one's ever heard of or are subtitled. But with our first Global Lens titles to come out, there was a response from some of the internet buyers that was very strong—Amazon and Netflix. Stronger than we thought it would be."

For more information, visit www.firstrunfeatures.com.

The Cinema Guild

The Cinema Guild, founded in 1972 by award-winning producers Philip and Mary-Ann Hobel (best known for the Academy Award-winning *Tender Mercies*), is regarded as one of the leading independent distributors of indie, foreign, and documentary films in the United States. Specializing in the non-theatrical/educational market, the New York-based company has only begun

releasing films theatrically in the past five years. "So in a sense we're both an old and new company," says Director of Feature Distribution Ryan Krivoshey, one of only six employees at The Cinema Guild.

Now a full service distributor releasing theatrically, on home video/DVD, and television/cable/ satellite, as well as continuing its commitment to the non-theatrical/educational market, The Cinema Guild is currently taking much more interest in foreign films, especially narratives. Of the 900 or so titles in their non-theatrical catalog, Krivoshey estimates 30 to 40 percent have been foreign. But in terms of their recent theatrical releases, 80 to 90 percent are foreign language.

"A pretty big part of what we do and have done is selling documentaries to universities, educational institutions, and libraries across the country," Krivoshey says. "Universities will buy films more on subject and content as opposed to foreign language. But in theatrical, it's interesting—we tend to focus more on foreign movies. I think maybe because the [commercial theatrical] mar-

"It's always nice when that happens," Krivoshey says.

Other recent/current foreign theatrical releases include the French-Japanese cross-cultural comedy *Fear and Trembling* and the Australian love story *Oyster Farmer*, while the Danish drama *The Inheritance* and Icelandic dark comedy *The Seagull's Laughter* have recently been released on DVD.

For more information, visit www.cinemaguild.com.

7th Art Releasing

"The most unique feature of 7th Art Releasing is that we're almost fully concentrated on documentary films," states Udy Epstein, co-founder and principle of the five-employee, Los Angeles-based boutique theatrical/video distribution house and foreign sales company which has been around since 1994.

Probably best known for its release of the 1997 Oscar-winning documentary *The Long Way Home*, 7th Art has also had its share of eclectic narrative fare in its catalog of more than 150 films—from the Ben Affleck screwball comedy *Glory Daze* and

erotic thriller *Sister My Sister*, to foreign art house dramas like the Swiss-Tunisian production *Honey & Ashes* and the Norwegian epic *The Last Lieutenant*. But the bulk of what they've handled in their first 10 years has been American-made historical, social-issue and pop-cultural documentaries like *The Nazi Officer's Wife*, *The Farm: Angola, USA*, and *Word Wars*.

Though few and far between, Epstein says there have been a couple of foreign documentaries, too, but it's a very limited market. "When you think about it, most foreign documentaries—and of course there are always exceptions—don't make it over here," he says. "Even those shot in foreign countries are mostly American productions. For example, *Born into Brothels* (Zana Briski and Ross Kaufman, 2004) was shot in India, but it's an American film—American producer, director, and the



Isild Le Besco and Ouassini Embarek in *A Tout de Suite* (courtesy Cinema Guild)

ket has shifted away from [international films], which has opened up an opportunity for smaller companies to get good quality foreign movies. Bigger companies are going for documentaries and American independents, and a lot of good foreign movies are getting overlooked now. So we try to find the gems that fall through the cracks."

The Cinema Guild had a recent theatrical hit in May with the French film *A Tout de Suite*, by Benoit Jacquot, which had the biggest per screen average for an indie on its opening weekend.

whole approach is somebody from here going there. But if you look at the real foreign documentaries, made by people in other countries and in foreign languages, they don't cross over that much. We do some of those, and historically have done some of those over the years." Examples of such include the German-made *Havana, Mi Amor*, last year's Spanish-produced festival favorite *Balseros*, as well as their current release, *The Swenkas*, a Danish production shot in South Africa that's still making the rounds of festivals and will have a theatrical release later this year.



Swenkas (courtesy Seventh Art Releasing)

7th Art offers a variety of distribution channels, including theatrical, TV/cable, home video/DVD, and non-theatrical. "We cover the gamut," Epstein says, adding that typically, when it comes to the home video market, they work with third parties.

In general, Epstein believes the demand for foreign titles in the US has somewhat leveled off in recent years. "From my vantage point, thinking about the more limited releases, I think the market is pretty steady," he says. "In the 1970s, there were art houses that were showing foreign films day and night, but there's been a huge decline throughout the 1990s. And now I think we've gotten to some sort of a plateau. It's a small market, and there's always one or two bigger films that are pushed by bigger companies, and that really see there's a chance to get some box office heat. But for the most part those art films—some of them good, some of them less so—tend to perform on a plateau. There's no more interest today than there was last year. But if the market is going to turn at one point, it's going to turn upward."

For more information, visit www.7thart.com.

Dinsdale Releasing

An outgrowth of the 12-year-old Chicago film publicity and marketing firm The Dinsdale Group, Dinsdale Releasing is the young, up-and-coming distribution company specializing in theatrical and non-theatrical release of independent and foreign films, mostly in the underground/cult/horror genre. Thus far, Dinsdale has worked with third parties for home video/DVD distribution (primarily MPI Home Video), and has about eight titles in their catalog.

Its most high profile release has been the cult hit *The Manson Family*, a 15-years-in-the-making American production by direc-

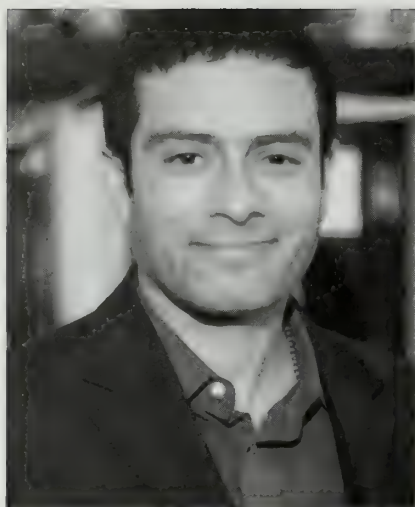
tor Jim Van Bebber that was finally completed with funds anted up by British home video distributor Blue Underground, which then brought it back to the United States via a deal with MPI/Dark Sky Films. Dinsdale Releasing handled the film's art house theatrical run.

Their only current foreign title, which is not foreign language but an Australian production, is *Bad Boy Bobby* by Rolf de Heer, a 1993 Venice Film Festival Jury Grand Prize winner which sat unreleased for 10 years but is finally seeing the light of day. Their other current theatrical release is *Chaos*, by American director David DeFalco, a horror flick that will get limited release this summer.

"My company is totally open to looking at foreign films," says Jay Bliznick, Dinsdale's sole proprietor and one of the founders of the Chicago Underground Film Festival. "It's where some of the best art house films are coming from. We definitely have open acquisitions for that sort of thing. It's a huge priority, as there's a lot of great movies out there that are not being released correctly in this country." He cites as an example the Spanish cult film *Perdita Durango*, a 1997 Mexican road movie directed by Alex de la Iglesia, and starring Rosie Perez and Javier Bardem, which, in Bliznick's opinion, suffered extensive cuts and was regrettably renamed *Dance With The Devil* for distribution in the United States by A-Pix Entertainment.

"That's one of the problems with foreign film right now," Bliznick says. "Everybody's looking for something that they can cut down to an R rating because they are so afraid. I'd rather take a chance trying to book a really difficult movie. I want to maintain the artist's sensibilities."

For more information, visit www.dinsdalegroup.com. ★



By Fernando Ramirez, Esq.

Distribution. The Deal. That's the goal of any independent producer after finishing production within budget and on schedule. Ideally, a filmmaker would want to have the film or program distributed by a single company with a reputable track record that would handle distribution in every market. However, although major distribution companies deal in both the domestic and foreign markets, as well as all media (non-theatrical, television, DVD), independent or niche-market distributors usually won't handle both domestic and foreign markets, and sometimes even within specified territories they only deal with certain media.

Distribution and licensing agreements define domestic rights as the United States (including its territories, possessions and military bases) and Canada, and they define foreign rights as the rest of the world or specified countries or regions. Categories of media rights commonly granted or licensed include theatrical, video, television, and ancillary rights, which in turn can be separated further (television rights include Pay TV, Pay Per View TV, Video On Demand, and Basic Cable). If a filmmaker does not sell all distribution rights in the film to a single company, either because the filmmaker cannot or does not want to secure this type of deal, a filmmaker can "split" the rights, or in other words enter into

Acing the Deal

The art of negotiating film distribution

more than one licensing arrangement according to specified countries and/or media.

Filmmakers should be aware that typically a small or niche market distributor working within domestic territories who is granted all rights (worldwide in any and all media) will enter into separate agreements with foreign subdistributors or "foreign sales agents" to handle licensing and sales outside of the domestic market, per country or region. Given the right set of circumstances, if filmmakers retain foreign rights, they can enter into these arrangements themselves. This could mean more money for the filmmaker (assuming any "profits" are made) in part because the domestic market distributor will have to pay the subdistributor or foreign sales agent a fee or commission for handling the film or program, after which the domestic distributor will keep its fee or percentage.

Territory, media, and additional terms by which these rights are transferred or licensed are spelled out in an agreement. As with domestic deals, the foreign agreement usually begins with a brief description of the film or program, including the title, genre, running time, and subjects. A filmmaker could enter into sepa-

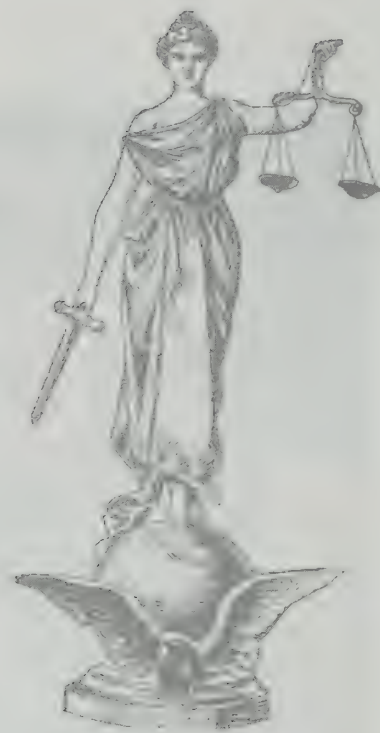
rate licensing deals territory by territory, in for example, Germany, Portugal, or Spain. A clause for every territory could read like this: "*Territory: The territory shall consist of the World*" or "*Territory: The territory shall consist of the Universe.*" However, a foreign market clause would define the market by country and/or languages spoken. For example:

Germany, and any and all German-speaking territories including without limitations Austria, Belgium, and Switzerland.

or

Portugal and any and all Portuguese-speaking territories.

Not only would this cover Portugal, but Brazil, Cape Verde, and even a few Portuguese-speaking countries in Africa such as Angola. Given this example, the filmmaker would have to do a little homework to determine if these additional territories outside of Portugal may not be of any consequences given the target consumer for the type of film being distributed. Clauses for all media could go on for several paragraphs (or one very long run-on sentence), beginning like this: "*The worldwide [or universewide]*



rights herein granted shall include any and all media, whether now known or hereafter discovered or devised, including without limitations"

Although foreign licensing and distribution agreements will vary according to markets, the following is a review of some relevant terms and clauses filmmakers should be familiar with:

Term: The agreement is measured in years as low as five to seven years, and as high as 25 years. Years are measured from the date all deliverables are submitted to the foreign company, not from the date the agreement is signed by the filmmaker and the company.

Payment Obligations: A foreign distributor or sales agent will keep 20 percent to as high as 35 percent of "net receipts" of "gross receipts" earned from the exploitation of the film or program. Gross receipts are monies received by the distributor or agent earned from various uses of the film. Various "deductions" are made before giving the filmmaker his or her percentage (if any money is left after the deductions). These deductions depend on the territory and media rights granted, but generally include laboratory and duplication costs, marketing and advertising, securing regional licenses, currency conversion, wire transfer and bank costs, shipping charges, insurance costs, foreign duties and taxes, translation and subtitle costs, and even general operating and overhead costs. Payments to the filmmaker can be made via wire transfer, or a letter of credit payable to the filmmaker upon presenting it the filmmaker's bank.

Release Requirements: To ensure that the film or program does not get "shelved," the agreement should have a release or air date commitment. If there is to be a theatrical release throughout the territory it should stipulate how soon after the deliverables are submitted, and the number of cities and theaters. There should be a minimum advertising commitment in US dollars. These requirements can apply to video/DVD and to the television broadcast of a program

with advance notification of the time and place of each telecast.

Cutting/Dubbing Rights & Censorship Clearances: To ensure that the film meets local censorship laws, and naturally if the film is in English, distributors will usually reserve the right to dub or subtitle as well as edit certain elements out of the film. The agreement should specify whether such decisions are subject to the filmmaker's approval for creative purposes. Additionally, the agreement should stipulate that the filmmaker will own all dubbed and subtitled versions of the film.

Deliverables: In light of the fact that the term of the agreement and release of the film or broadcast of the program is contingent upon delivering certain items, the filmmaker should clearly stipulate and verify what those items and requirements are (format, licensing, etc.), and should request a signed acknowledgment from the company that the items have been submitted by a specified date. Additionally, filmmakers should try and retain possession of prints, masters, and any original materials such as releases and agreements. In the event of a dispute or bankruptcy, regaining possession of these deliverables can prove even more difficult in a foreign country.

Accounting and Audit Rights: Filmmakers should request a detailed itemization of all distribution expenses and costs. Under most agreements, domestic and foreign, the filmmaker may be deemed to have consented to the accuracy of statements unless he or she objects or initiates legal action within a year or two of receipt of each statement. Additionally, costs of arranging for auditing or inspection of books in another country can be higher, unless the distributor has offices in the United States. The agreement should provide that in the event an audit discloses that the filmmaker has been underpaid a certain amount (\$1,000 or 5 percent, for example), the distributor is obligated to reimburse the filmmaker's auditing costs.

Rights Reserved: If the filmmaker decides to split the rights, each agreement

should stipulate what rights are reserved by the filmmaker, such as ancillary, subsidiary, and allied rights including dramatic (play), remake, sequel, prequel, television spin-off, radio, electronic publishing, licensing and merchandising, music publishing, soundtrack recording, comic books, video games, and print and literary publishing (such as novelizations, publication of screenplays and/or treatments, behind-the-scenes/making-of books), and any and all rights not specifically stipulated in the agreement.

Jurisdiction: The Governing Law provision of any agreement identifies which country or state's law will be applied when interpreting and enforcing the agreement. US law and jurisdiction should govern. Some states such as California and New York, have established laws with precedence concerning film and media law issues, including international disputes. Additionally, agreeing to US jurisdiction will avoid extra expenses associated with traveling and hiring local counsel familiar with the film industry.

Given the right set of circumstances, a foreign distribution or licensing deal can generate income for and enhance the career of a filmmaker in certain markets. Although granting partial rights to multiple distributors can increase the possibility of generating revenues, if not managed carefully granting rights in one country (or several countries) could conflict or violate rights granted to a distributor or programmer in another country.

In addition to producing a great film, filmmakers should research the reputation, experience, and credits of foreign distributors and agents before signing. Without direct or backdoor access to programming or development executives, attending festivals and markets remains the most productive and effective way a for filmmaker to sell a film or program. All filmmakers want their films seen by the widest possible audience. To protect your interests, though, it helps to understand that the art of the distribution deal isn't necessarily just about art. ★



No Warning, No Cry?

Public broadcasting takes a turn for the Right

By Matt Dunne

Over a year ago, I wrote about how little-noticed changes at the Corporation for Public Broadcasting could be warning signs that the administration was looking to use the entity that funds public television and radio to advance a political agenda. But if there ever were a subtlety to the CPB's actions, it's all but disappeared. Traditionally viewed as a model of political independence, CPB is conjuring up images of Joe McCarthy and George Orwell's *1984*.

The Corporation for Public Broadcasting is the federally chartered entity created by Congress to provide funding to public media including PBS and NPR. The CPB is charged with helping to ensure that programming has "objectivity and balance". However, responding to fears that public broadcasting would become government propaganda machines, the Public Broadcasting Act of 1967 explicitly prohibited the CPB from using this funding to produce, schedule, or disseminate programming. CPB itself is structured to reduce the risk of becoming an instrument to advance political agendas. Board membership is based on terms, and the CPB is required to have balanced party representation. Congressional funding is made two years in advance to insulate allocation decisions from political whims.

Since the Nixon era, conservatives have dealt with the CPB by trying to eliminate

it. Under the Reagan administration and then again during the Gingrich revolution, axing the Corporation was a high priority. These efforts were thwarted only by a powerful lobbying campaign by the large and passionate consumers of public radio and television.

Things are different now. Instead of trying to eliminate the CPB, this administration wants to own it. It fits perfectly with other communication strategies in agencies ranging from the Environmental Protection Agency to the Department of Agriculture, beginning with blatant Madison Avenue-ization of legislation such as the Clear Skies Initiative. The Department of Education received criticism for expanding into the world of new media by hiring influential bloggers and newspaper columnists to offer positive spin on the controversial No Child Left Behind program. More recently, it has come to light that taxpayer dollars have funded high quality film and radio clips formatted to look exactly like newscasts which have been distributed to television and radio stations all over the country. Many of these pro-administration spots have been broadcast in their entirety, with no disclosure of their source.

While some have argued that this is the natural extension of political spin efforts by whomever is in the White House, politicizing the CPB was something previously

seen as off limits. The fear of a Soviet-style, government-controlled national media has dissuaded past administrations from overtly pursuing political ends through this quasi-governmental entity. Not anymore.

Over the last year and a half, efforts have been made to clearly influence the content of public television. Unabashedly honest about its desire to change what appears on the airwaves, the Bush administration appointed top GOP fundraisers Cheryl Halpern and Gay Hart Gaines (the former Chairwoman of Gingrich's GOPAC) to the CPB board. Despite numerous independent studies demonstrating that PBS content is seen as balanced and objective (including a 2005 Roper Public Affairs & Media analysis), the new appointees were clear in their confirmation testimony that they wanted to correct the "liberal bias" of public television. This new conservative board majority gave Chairman Kenneth Tomlinson, a former editor-in-chief of Reader's Digest and a member of the Reagan administration, an implied mandate to engage in the discussion of content with PBS.

Tomlinson wasted no time. "The Tucker Carlson Show," launched last summer as an effort to "balance" the other journalism programs offered on PBS, was joined by a new show featuring the conservative editorial page editor of the *Wall Street Journal*, Paul Gigot. Tomlinson not

only advocated for this latest offering, but he personally pursued the necessary corporate sponsorship.

Unphased by concern expressed about the CPB taking a role in dictating PBS programming, Tomlinson said in a May interview with "On The Media's" Bob Garfield, "I want to make sure that when you have some programs that tilt left, we also have some programs that tilt right so the viewer can make up his or her own mind." Clearly the separation of funding and programming are not at all a concern of the chairman.

Now comes the creepy part. According to a *New York Times* story on May 2, last year Tomlinson hired a consultant to review the content of Bill Moyers's show "Now," organizing Moyers's guests under headings such as "Anti-business," "Anti-Bush," and "Anti-Tom Delay." Then in March, he hired White House press operative Mary Catherine Andrews to put together an ombudsman's office to conduct ongoing "bias" evaluation of the content of both NPR and PBS programs.

Then, with no warning and late on a Friday evening in April, the CPB announced that its president, Kathleen Cox would be replaced after only 10 months on the job. Cox had been heralded as a non-polarizing leader who had risen through CPB ranks before assuming the top post. The abrupt move brought an uncharacteristically terse response from PBS President Pat Mitchell, who stated that she was completely surprised by the announcement. Beyond comments expressing deep regret in the press statement, Mitchell wrote that Cox "recognized the need for CPB to remain a strong heat shield to protect public media from political pressure." It doesn't take a lot of interpretation to read from this statement that without Cox in that position, the heat shield is gone.

The question on everyone's mind was: Who would Tomlinson pick to replace Cox? The answer: Patricia Harrison, former co-chairwoman of the Republican National Committee.

Beyond the obviously outrageous political takeover of the CPB in an effort to drive public television content to the right, the frightening part is that no one is

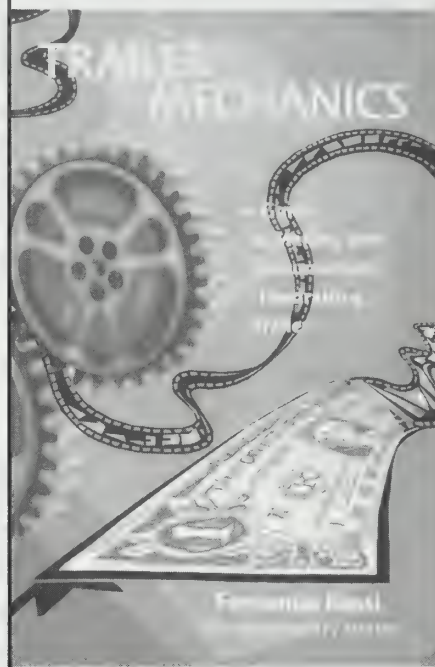
blushing. Tomlinson seems genuinely shocked to hear that anyone has a problem with his actions. It used to be fun to be a conspiracy theorist, but now the conspiracy is right out in the open. The current administration appears to see no problem whatsoever in eliminating the founding principles of the CPB, principles that kept public television and radio separate from politics.

Then there's the question of the CPB's funding. You would usually anticipate reductions for public television during a Republican controlled Congress and administration, but instead the funding levels have actually increased since 2000. Most of us in the progressive media community would see this as a positive step, unless of course the additional resources are simply used to finance conservative, politically motivated content easily found on conservative cable channels. One could even see the increase in funding as an important strategy in the effort to finish blanketing the airwaves with right-leaning news programs since a disproportionate number of PBS viewers are those who do not have access to cable and the Fox News Network.

The administration's 2006 budget proposes to cut nearly everything non-military, including CPB. Yet, even this decision appears to be part of a broader political strategy. When asked about potential funding cuts in the "On the Media" interview, Tomlinson responded, "I just think that my course of action, in conjunction with common sense, will encourage greater support for public broadcasting." Read: Do it my way, PBS affiliates, and you won't lose your money.

The actions at the CPB, along with the other strategies engaged by this administration, reveal an alarming pattern of using public resources to advance conservative ideology through the media. Democratic members of Congress have called for an investigation of abuse of the Public Broadcasting Act of 1967, but there must be clear and loud opposition beyond the media-watch community to stop this moving train. Outrage must be heard, and calls to action must be taken now before the best solution is to not have a CPB at all. ★

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FESTIVALS

By Bo Mehrad

Listings do not constitute an endorsement. We recommend that you contact the festival directly before sending cassettes, as details may change after the magazine goes to press. Deadline: 1st of the month two months prior to cover date (e.g., Sept. 1st for Nov. issue). Include festival dates, categories, prizes, entry fees, deadlines, formats & contact info. Send to: festivals@aivf.org.

DOMESTIC

AFRICAN DIASPORA FILM FESTIVAL, Nov. 25 - Dec. 11, NY. Deadline: June 30 (docs, shorts); Aug. 31 (features). Noncompetitive fest presents films that depict human experience of people of color all over the world. Founded: 1993. Cats: feature, short, doc. Awards: Public Award for a film directed by a woman of color. Formats: 16mm, 35mm, Beta SP. Preview on VHS. Entry Fee: None. Contact: Festival; (212) 864-1760; fax: 316-6020; info@nyadff.org; www.nyadff.org.

ALAMEDA INT'L FILM FESTIVAL, Nov. 11-13, CA. Deadline: Apr. 30; June 30; Aug. 30 (final). The fest seeks narrative, documentary, & animated works (30 min. or shorter) completed after December 31. Exhibition & preview on VHS (NTSC) & DVD. Entry fee: \$15-\$25. (510) 740-0220, ext. 114; fax: (510) 749-7517; info@alamedafilmfest.com; www.alamedafilmfest.com. Cats: short, any style or genre. Preview on VHS (NTSC) & DVD. Entry Fee: \$15 to \$20. Contact: Festival; (510) 740-0220, ext. 114; fax: (510) 749-7517; info@alamedafilmfest.com; www.alamedafilmfest.com.

ANNAPOLIS FILM FESTIVAL, Nov. 11-14, MD. Deadline: June 3; June 24; July 8 (final). A four-day fest showcasing independent films & documentaries produced by local & nat'l filmmakers. Its mission is to "celebrate the capacity of independent film to move us, teach us & entertain us." Cats: feature, doc, short, animation. Formats: 35mm, Beta SP, DV, DVD. Preview on VHS or DVD. Entry

Fee: \$25-\$50. Contact: Festival; (410) 263-2388; fax: 263-2629; info@annapolisfilmfestival.com; www.annapolisfilmfestival.com.

ASHEVILLE FILM FESTIVAL, Nov. 27-30, NC. Deadline: July 23. Cats: feature, doc, short, student. Formats: 35mm, DVD. Preview on VHS (NTSC). Entry Fee: \$30; \$20 (student). Contact: City of Asheville Parks & Recreation; (828) 259-5800; fax: 259-5606; mporter@ashevillenc.gov; www.ashevillefilmfestival.com.

ASPEN FILMFEST, Sept. 28-Oct. 2, CO. Deadline: July 8. Founded: 1979. Cats: feature, doc, family, children, animation. Awards: Non-Competitive. Formats: 16mm, 35mm, Beta SP, U-matic, DigiBeta. Preview on VHS (NTSC or PAL) or DVD. Entry Fee: \$35. Contact: Laura Thielen; (970) 925-6882; fax: 925-1967; filmfest@aspensfilm.org; www.aspensfilm.org.

AUSTIN FILM FESTIVAL, Oct. 20-27, TX. Deadline: June 15; July 15 (final). Fest is dedicated to the writer as the heart of the creative process of filmmaking & uncovers outstanding, emerging writers, fostering their development through panels, workshops & master classes conducted by professionals. Founded: 1994. Cats: feature, short, student, script. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, DigiBeta, Beta SP. Preview on VHS or DVD. Entry Fee: \$40; \$50 (final). Contact: Lisa Albracht; (800) 310-FEST/ (512) 478-4795; fax: 478-6205; film@austinfilmfestival.com; www.austinfilmfestival.com.

BARE BONES SCRIPT-2-SCREEN FILM FESTIVAL, October 13-16, OK. Deadline: July 15, Aug. 31 (final). Cats: script. Formats: Screenplays only. Entry Fee: \$30 (30 Pgs or less); \$40 (31-59 pgs); \$50 (60 pgs or more). Contact: Festival; (918) 391-1313; script2screenfest@yahoo.com; www.script2screenfilmfestival.com.

BEARDED CHILD UNDERGROUND FILM FESTIVAL, August 6-7, MN. Deadline: July 15. Unconventional fest seeks to bring unusual cinema to Northern Minnesota; "weird & obscure works are heavily encouraged, however personal & experimental films also do well". Cross-country tour will follow the fest. Cats: any style or genre. Formats: 1/2", 16mm, DVD, super 8, Mini-DV. Preview on VHS. Entry Fee: \$10 per 20 min. Contact: Dan Anderson; bcfilmfest@gmail.com; www.beardedchild.com.

BERKELEY VIDEO & FILM FESTIVAL, Nov., CA. Deadline: July 10. Film fest seeks work from independent producers completed in the past two years. Past entries are ineligible. Cats: doc, feature, short, experimental, animation, music video, commercials/psa, student, youth media. Formats: super 8, 8mm, 16mm, 35mm, 70mm, 1/2", 3/4", Beta SP, S-VHS. Most digital formats. Preview in VHS or Beta SP. Entry Fee: \$30-\$40. Contact: Festival; (510) 843-3699; fax: 843-3379; maketv@aol.com; www.berkeleyvideofilmfest.org.

BETHEL FILM FESTIVAL, Oct. 25-30, NY. Deadline: May 31; July 15 (final). Cats: fea-

ture, doc, short, student, animation. Awards: Cash & In-kind prizes. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, Beta SP, HD, DV Cam. Preview on VHS or DVD. Entry Fee: \$20-\$60. Contact: Carol Spiegel; (203) 790-4321; email info@bethelfilmfestival.com; www.bethelfilmfestival.com.

BIG APPLE FILM FESTIVAL, Nov. 17-19, NY. Deadline: June 30; Sept. 1; Sept. 15 (final). Fest takes place at the Anthology Film Archives in NYC. Festival will incl. special screenings, networking events, screenplay competition, awards ceremony & special guests. Founded: 2004. Cats: any style or genre. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, Beta SP, Mini-DV, DVCAM, DVD, 1/2". Preview on VHS or DVD. Entry Fee: \$45-\$60. Contact: Festival; info@bigapplefilmfestival.com; www.bigapplefilmfestival.com.

BIG SKY DOC FILM FESTIVAL, Feb. 16-22, MT. Deadline: Sept. 1, Nov. 1 (final). Held at the restored Roxy Theater in downtown Missoula, Montana. The competitive event is open to non-fiction films & videos of all styles, genres, & lengths. Official selections w/ production dates prior to January 1 of previous yr. are eligible for entry but will screen out of competition. Cats: doc. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, DVD, Beta SP, Mini-DV, DVCam. preview on VHS or DVD. Entry Fee: \$20 (shorts); \$30 (features). Contact: Doug Hawes-Davis; (406) 728-0753; bigsky@highplains.org; www.bigskyfilmfest.org.

CHICAGO INT'L FILM FESTIVAL, October 6-20, IL. Deadline: July 25. Annual event is the oldest competitive int'l film fest in N. America spotlighting the latest work in int'l & independent cinema by featuring both established int'l directors & new directors. Cats: feature, short, doc, student. Formats: 16mm, 35mm, 70mm, 3/4", 1/2", DigiBeta. Preview/Judging formats on 1/2" VHS (NTSC, PAL or SECAM); Film (16mm or 35mm); or DVD (Region 0 or 1). Entry Fee: \$100 (feature); \$80 (doc feature); \$40 (short under 30 min.); \$50 (short 30-60 min.); \$30 (student). Late fees: \$20-\$100. Contact: Cinema/Chicago; (312) 425-9400; fax: (312) 425-0944; info@chicagofilmfestival.com; www.chicagofilmfestival.com.

DANCE ON CAMERA FESTIVAL, Jan. 4-7; 13-14, NY. Deadline: Sept. 15. This touring fest is the oldest annual int'l dance film/video event in the world. Cats: Experimental, Feature, Short, doc, animation. Formats: 35mm, Beta SP, Mini-DV, DVD. Preview on VHS. Entry Fee: \$35. Contact: Dance Films Association, Inc.; (212) 727-0764; fax: (212) 727-0764; dfa5@earthlink.net; www.dancefilmsassn.org.

DENVER INT'L EXPERIMENTAL FILM FESTIVAL, Oct. 8-15, CO. Deadline: Sept. 1. Fest accepting experimental works of all lengths & genres produced anytime in the last 100 years. Cats: experimental, animation, short, doc, feature. Formats: 16mm, super 8, DV, S-VHS, VHS, 1/2". Preview on VHS. Entry Fee: \$10. Contact: Richard Sanchez, director; (720) 220-8916; DIEFilmFestival@aol.com; www.experimentalfilmchannel.com.

DETROIT DOCS INT'L FILM FESTIVAL, Nov. 2-6, MI. Deadline: July 30; Aug. 15 (final). Annual fest created to showcase the best in non-fiction & documentary film. Special emphasis is given to works w/ original & creative modes of storytelling. Founded: 2002. Cats: doc, any style or genre. Preview on VHS or DVD. Entry Fee: \$20; \$40 (final). Contact: Festival; (313) 417-9784; info@detroitdocs.org; www.detroitdocs.org.

DUMBO SHORT FILM & VIDEO FESTIVAL, Oct. 14-16, NY. Deadline: June 1; Aug. 1 (final). Film & video event is part of the annual D.U.M.B.O. Art Under the Bridge Festival & is designed to showcase the work of independent & experimental film & videomakers living in NYC's five boroughs. Works must be 30 min. or less. Founded: 1996. Cats: short, any style or genre. Formats: 16mm, 1/2", Mini-DV, DVD, Beta SP. Preview on VHS. Entry Fee: \$15; \$25 (final). Contact: D.U.M.B.O. Arts Center; (718) 694-0831; mail@dumboartscenter.org; www.dumboartscenter.org.

FORREST J ACKERMAN FILM FAN AWARDS, Nov. 11-13, NY. Deadline: Sept. 1. Awards will be handed out at a banquet during Astronomicon, Rochester's science fiction & fantasy convention in Rochester New York. Awards for creators of fan films. Seeking works by filmmakers who are fans of their

subject matter & making their own versions of movies & television shows like Aliens, The Matrix, Indiana Jones, & the X-Men. Cats: feature, doc, short. Formats: 1/2", S-VHS, DVD. Preview on VHS or DVD. Contact: The Rochester Fantasy Fans; Fanfilms@astronomicon.info; www.astronomicon.info/Fanfilmawards.html.

FRESNO REEL PRIDE INT'L GAY & LESBIAN FILM FESTIVAL, Sept. 14-18, CA. Deadline: July 31. Founded: 1990. Cats: short, feature, doc. Formats: 35mm, Beta SP, DV Cam, 1/2". Preview on VHS (NTSC) or DVD. Entry Fee: None. Contact: Stephen Mintz, Program Director; (559) 360-9515; fax: 443-0700; Mintzworks@aol.com; www.reelpride.com.

H.P. LOVECRAFT FILM FESTIVAL, Oct. 7-9, OR. Deadline: Aug. 1. Purpose of fest is to "promote the works of H. P. Lovecraft through cinematic adaptations by student, amateur & professional filmmakers." Submissions should deal w/ supernatural & cosmic horror. Founded: 1996. Cats: feature, doc, short, animation, music video. Awards: Best of show; best short; best animation; best feature. Formats: DV, 16mm, 35mm, S-VHS, DVD, Mini-DV. Preview on VHS (NTSC) or DVD. Entry Fee: \$10. Contact: Festival; (503) 282-3155; info@hplfilmfestival.com; www.hplfilmfestival.com.

HOPE & DREAMS FILM FESTIVAL, October 7-9, NJ. Deadline: July 28. Themes which emphasize issues of hope & dreams will be given additional consideration. First time directors are encouraged to submit. Founded: 1998. Cats: feature, doc, short, animation, any style or genre. Awards: Cash awards & prizes. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, 3/4", S-VHS, Beta SP, super 8, Hi8, DV. Preview on VHS. Entry Fee: \$40. Contact: Festival; fax: (908) 459-4681; hopeanddreams@earthlink.net; www.hopeanddreams.com.

LONG ISLAND GAY & LESBIAN FILM FESTIVAL, November 11-17, NY. Deadline: July 1; Aug. 15 (final). Entry Fee: \$15; \$25 (final). Contact: Stephen Flynn; (631) 547-6650; fax: 547-6651; info@liglff.org; www.liglff.org.

MANHATTAN SHORT FILM FESTIVAL, Sept. 16-25, NY. Deadline: June 30 (scripts); July 31. Once a yr. thousands of New Yorkers gather

inside Union Square Park to watch short films. The fest will screen in over 30 Founded: 1998. Cats: short, any style or genre, script. Formats: DigiBeta. Preview on VHS (NTSC/PAL). Entry Fee: \$35; \$25 (scripts). Contact: Nicholas Mason; (201) 969-8049; info@msfilmfest.com; www.msfilmfest.com.

MELBOURNE INDEPENDENT FILMMAKERS FESTIVAL, Nov. 10-12, FL. Deadline: Aug. 4. Fest is aimed at promoting independent filmmakers & local interest in independent film. All funds raised go to charities, Unconditional Love, Inc., a local HIV treatment center & The Yellow Umbrella which helps the victim's of child abuse. Cats: feature, doc, short, animation. Preview on VHS (NTSC) & DVD. Entry Fee: None. Contact: Terry Cronin, program chairman; TCRonin2@aol.com; www.3boysproductions.com.

NEW HAMPSHIRE FILM EXPO, Oct. 14-16, NH. Deadline: July 1; Aug. 1 (final). This is the state's largest film event, incl.: independent & student film screenings, tradeshow, young filmmaker's workshops & others. Cats: feature, doc, short, animation, student, any style or genre, script. Formats: Beta SP, DVD, Mini-DV, VHS-NTSC, 1/2". Preview on VHS, Mini-DV or DVD. Entry Fee: \$20-\$45. Contact: NHFX; (603) 647-NHFX (6439); info@nhfx.com; www.nhfx.com.

NEW YORK FILM FESTIVAL, Sept. 23-Oct. 9, NY. Deadline: July 16. The New York Film Works can originally be shot on video or film, but you must have a 16mm or 35mm print for actual fest exhibition. Founded: 1962. Cats: feature, doc, short, experimental, animation, student, any style or genre. Formats: 35mm, 16mm. Preview on VHS, DVD or Print. Entry Fee: None. Contact: Sara Bensman; (212) 875-5638; fax: 875-5636; festival@filmlinc.com; www.filmlinc.com.

PALM BEACH JEWISH FILM FESTIVAL, Dec. 1-11, FL. Deadline: March 1 (early), Aug. 20 (final). This fest aims to "speak to the world-wide Jewish experience." Cats: "Jewish films," any style or genre. Preview on VHS. Contact: Jewish Arts Foundation; pbjff@kaplanjcc.org; palmbeachjewishfilm.org.

PALM SPRINGS INT'L FILM FESTIVAL, Jan. 5-16, CA. Deadline: Sept. 23; Oct. 14 (final).

Founded: 1990. Cats: feature, doc. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, Beta SP, DigiBeta, DVcam, HDcam. Preview on VHS or DVD. Entry Fee: \$50; \$75 (final). Contact: Darryl Macdonald; (760) 322-2930; fax: 322-4087; program ming@psfilmfest.org; www.psfilmfest.org.

PITTSBURGH INT'L LESBIAN & GAY FILM FESTIVAL, October 14-23, PA. Deadline: July 15. Festival has been providing Pittsburgh & the tri-state area w/ ten days of innovative, provocative, entertaining lesbian, gay, bisexual & transgendered films. Founded: 1985. Cats: feature, doc, short, animation, youth media, family. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, 1/2", DVD. Preview on VHS or DVD. Entry Fee: None. Contact: PILGFF; (412) 422-6776; fax: same; films@pilgff.org; www.pilgff.org.

PORTLAND INT'L SHORT SHORT FILM FESTIVAL, Sept. 23-24, OR. Deadline: July 15; July 31 (final). Fest will showcase films from around the globe that clock in at 10 min. or less. Fest is open to all subject matter & production formats. Founded: 2002. Cats: any style or genre, short. Formats: DVD, 1/2", 35mm, 16mm. Preview on VHS (NTSC). Entry Fee: \$20; \$40 (final). Contact: Zonker Films; info@zonkerfilms.com; www.zonkerfilms.com.

PUTNAM COUNTY INTERNATIONAL FILM AND VIDEO FESTIVAL, Oct. 1-2, NY. Deadline: July 16. Festival is open to Film & Video makers worldwide. Two days of screenings in a huge timber-trussed lodge, projected in XGA resolution. Fest dubs itself as a "great place to network with other filmmakers, visual artists & musicians." Fest also includes art exhibits, free networking/PR table and Q&A sessions with filmmakers. Founded: 2001. Cats: trailers, works-in-progress, feature, doc, short, any style or genre, music video, animation, experimental, student. Formats: DV, Beta SP, Mini-DV, DVD, Betacam, DVCAM. Preview on VHS. Entry Fee: \$25 under 59 min.; \$35 over 60 min.. Contact: Maryann Arrien, Festival Director; (845) 528-7420; maryann@putnamvalleyarts.com; www.putnamvalleyarts.com

REEL JEWS FILM FESTIVAL, Nov. 7-12, NY. Deadline: July 31. Spearheaded by MAKOR, fest showcases an eclectic mix of works from filmmakers who are Jewish or explore

themes common to Jews. Cats: feature, doc, short, Work-in-progress, any style or genre. Entry Fee: None. Contact: Alexandra Siegler, Director of Film & Media; (212) 413-8821; fax: 413-8860; ASiegler@92y.org; www.makor.org.

REELING: CHICAGO LESBIAN & GAY INT'L FILM FESTIVAL, Nov. 3-10, IL. Deadline: July 1; July 15. All genres & lengths accepted. Founded: 1981. Cats: Any style or genre, Feature, Experimental, Animation, Short, doc. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, Beta SP, DVD, 1/2", Mini-DV. Preview on VHS. Entry Fee: \$15-\$25. Contact: c/o Chicago Filmmakers; (773) 293-1447; fax: (773) 293-0575; reeling@chicagofilmmakers.org; www.chicagofilmmakers.org.

REHOBOTH BEACH INDEPENDENT FILM FESTIVAL, Nov. 9-13, DE. Deadline: June 19; July 15 (final). Annual fest celebrates independent & foreign cinema in a picturesque coastal resort setting. No repeat entries. Founded: 1998. Cats: feature, doc, animation, experimental, children, short, gay & lesbian, student. Formats: 35mm, Beta SP, DVD, 1/2". Preview on VHS (NTSC, PAL) or DVD. Entry Fee: \$20; \$25 (final). Contact: David Gold; (302) 645-9095; fax: 645-9460; sue@rehobothfilm.com; www.rehobothfilm.com.

RIVER'S EDGE FILM FESTIVAL, Aug. 18-21, KY. Deadline: July 15. Fest dubs itself the "fastest-growing arts district in U.S.A. Dedicated to bringing the world of independent film to a smart, arts-minded river region." Formats: DVD, 1/2", 16mm, 35mm, Mini-DV. Preview on VHS or DVD. Entry Fee: \$15-\$35. Contact: Maiden Alley Cinema; (270) 442-7723; info@riversedgefilmfestival.com; www.riversedgefilmfestival.com.

ROUTE 66 FILM FESTIVAL, Sept. 17-18, IL. Deadline: July 15. Fest seeks works that "involve some kind of journey" (physical, emotional, intellectual). Cats: feature, short, experimental. Awards: Awards for judges' choice, best of fest, audience favorite. Formats: 1/2", DVD. Preview on VHS. Entry Fee: \$20 (features); \$10 (shorts, under 20 min.). Contact: Linda McElroy; linmcelroy@aol.com; www.route66filmfestival.com.

SAN DIEGO GIRL FILM FESTIVAL, Oct. 7-9, CA. Deadline: June 1; Aug. 1 (final). Formats: 16mm, 35mm, Mini-DV, DVD, Beta SP. Preview on VHS or DVD. Entry Fee: \$25; \$30 (final). Contact: San Diego Women Film Festival; (858) 531-5390; ReneeHerrell@sdgff.org; www.sdgff.org.

SCOTTSDALE INT'L FILM FESTIVAL, Oct. 7-11, AZ. Deadline: Aug. 15. Feature length films w/ the goal of entertaining, educating & stimulating new thoughts & ideas. A variety of subjects, themes, & messages are programmed. Founded: 2001. Cats: feature, doc. Awards: Audience Awards: Best film, best actor, best actress, best screenplay, best director. Formats: 35mm, Beta SP, DV-Cam. Preview on VHS or DVD. Entry Fee: None. Contact: Amy Ettinger; (602) 410-1074; scottsdaleIFF@aol.com; www.scottsdalefilmfestival.com.

SCREAMFEST HORROR FILM & SCREENPLAY COMPETITION, October 14-23, CA. Deadline: July 15; Aug. 15. Fest is a mix of films, sketch comedy, & contests for best costume & loudest shriek. Festivities take place at the Vogue Theatre in Hollywood. Cats: feature, short, animation, script. Entry Fee: features \$40, shorts \$30 & screenplays \$35. Contact: Rachel Belofsky, festival producer; (310) 358-3273; fax: 358-3272; screamfestla@aol.com; www.screamfestla.com.

SHOCKERFEST, Sept. 23-25, CA. Deadline: June 15; July 15. Formerly the Firelight Shock Film Festival, fest is genre specific to the Horror, Fantasy & Sci-Fi genres, accepting all lengths & styles of film w/in these genres. All films are prescreened & judged prior to public exhibition. Founded: 2002. Cats: feature, doc, short, animation, experimental. Formats: 35mm, DVD. Preview on VHS (NTSC). Entry Fee: Short: \$45, \$55 (late); Mini-Short: \$35; Feature: \$55, \$65 (late). Contact: Dr. George Baker; (866) 988-2886; fax: (209) 531-0233; director@shockfest.com; www.shockfest.com.

SLAMDANCE FILM FESTIVAL, January 19-27, UT. Deadline: shorts: Aug. 29; Oct. 11 (final); features: Aug. 29; Oct. 17 (final). Started by 3 filmmakers in 1995, fest's primary objective is to present new indie films by new filmmakers. Fest runs concurrent w/

Sundance Film Festival & takes place in the heart of Park City, Utah. Films showcased attract industry interest & several have received distrib. & agency rep. Founded: 1995. Cats: Short, Doc, Feature, Animation, Experimental, Any style or genre. Awards: Formats: 35mm, 16mm, 3/4", 1/2", Beta SP, DVD, Web. Preview on VHS. Entry Fee: \$25-\$60. Contact: Slamdance; (323) 466-1786; fax: 466-1784; mail@slamdance.com; www.slamdance.com.

ST. LOUIS INT'L FILM FESTIVAL, Nov. 10-20, MO. Deadline: March 1; July 31 (final). Annual fest brings together American indies, horizon-expanding int'l films & mainstream studio films to audiences prior to commercial release. Cats: Short, Doc, Feature, Animation. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, Beta SP. Preview on VHS. Entry Fee: \$50 (features); \$25 (shorts, under 45 min.); \$100/\$50 (all late films); discount though Withoutabox. Contact: Chris Clark, Artistic Director; (314) 454-0042, ext. 12; fax: 454-0540; chris@cinemastlouis.org; www.sliff.org.

STARZ DENVER INT'L FILM FESTIVAL, Nov. 10-20, CO. Deadline: July 15. Annual invitational expo of film presents approx. 200 films over 11 days & plays host to more than 125 film artists. Founded: 1978. Cats: feature, doc, animation, experimental, children, short, family, student. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, video. Preview on VHS (NTSC/PAL) or DVD. Entry Fee: \$20 (students); \$35. Contact: Denver Film Society; (303) 595-3456; fax: 595-0956; dfs@denverfilm.org; www.denverfilm.org.

SUNDANCE FILM FESTIVAL, Jan. 20-30, UT. Deadline: Aug. 19 (features/shorts); Sept. 2 (Final: shorts); Sept. 16 (Final: features). Dramatic & doc entries for the Independent Feature Film Competition must have 50% U.S. financing & be completed no earlier than Oct. of previous year. For competition, entries must be world premieres. Foreign feature & documentary films (less than 50% U.S. financed) are eligible for the World Cinema Competition. Ind feature film competition awards Grand Jury Prize, Cinematography Award & Directing Award (popular ballot). Other awards: in dramatic cat, Screenwriters Award; in doc cat, Freedom of Expression Award. All films in

Competition are also eligible for Audience Awards. American films selected in short film cat are eligible for the Jury Prize in American Short Filmmaking. About 135 feature-length & 90 short films are selected for each fest & large audience of over 36,000 incl. major distributors, programmers, journalists, critics & agents. Int'l press coverage extensive. Founded: 1985. Cats: Feature, Short, Doc. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, DV, Video. Preview on VHS. Entry Fee: \$25/\$35 (shorts); \$35/\$50 (features). Contact: Geoffrey Gilmore/John Cooper; (310) 360-1981; fax: 360-1969; programming@sundance.org; www.sundance.org.

TELLURIDE FILM FESTIVAL, Sept. 2-5, CO. Deadline: May 1; July 15 (final). Annual fest, held in a Colorado mountain town, is a Labor Day weekend celebration commemorating the art of filmmaking: honoring the great masters of cinema, discovering the rare & unknown, bringing new works by the world's greatest directors & the latest in independent film. Cats: feature, short, student, any style or genre, doc, experimental. Formats: 16mm, 35mm, 3/4", 1/2", S-VHS, Beta, Beta SP, DigiBeta, Hi8, DV, DVD. Preview on VHS or DVD. Entry Fee: \$35 (19 min. or less); \$55 (20-39 min.); \$75 (40-59 min.); \$95 (60 min. & over); \$25 (student films, any length). Contact: Bill Pence / Tom Luddy; (603) 433-9202; fax: 433-9206; mail@telluridefilmfestival.org; www.telluridefilmfestival.org.

TEMECULA VALLEY INT'L FILM FESTIVAL, September 14-18, CA. Deadline: July 30. Cats: Feature, Short, Student. Formats: 35mm, Beta, Beta SP. Preview on VHS or DVD. Entry Fee: \$25; \$10 students. Contact: Jo Moulton; (909) 699-8681; fax: 699-5503; tviff@earthlink.net; www.tviff.com.

TULSA OVERGROUND FILM FESTIVAL, Aug. 19-21, OK. Deadline: July 18. Designed to challenge, inspire, & showcase Oklahoma filmmakers; emphasizes the unique characters, experiences, & locations that Oklahoma has to offer. Works must not be longer than 20 min. Cats: feature, doc, short, animation, experimental, any style or genre. Formats: 1/2", Mini-DV, DVD. Preview on VHS or DVD. Entry Fee: \$15. Contact: Festival; (918) 585-1223; tulsaoverground@hotmail.com; www.tulsaoverground.com.

WILLIAMSTOWN FILM FESTIVAL, Oct. 28-Nov. 6, MA. Deadline: Aug. 23. A non-competitive, boutique fest which showcases independent features & shorts to highlight film in the Berkshires, a part of America celebrated for world-class theater, art, music, & dance. Founded: 1998. Cats: feature, doc, short, animation, student. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, S-VHS, Beta, super 8, DVD. Preview on VHS. Entry Fee: \$20-\$55. Contact: Steve Lawson; (413) 458-9700; fax: 458-2702; contactus@williamstownfilmfest.com; www.williamstownfilmfest.com.

WOMEN IN THE DIRECTORS CHAIR INT'L FILM & VIDEO FESTIVAL, March 12-21, IL. Deadline: Sept. 1, Oct. 1 (final). Annual fest is the largest & longest running women's film/video fest in U.S. Founded: 1979. Cats: any style or genre, installation, children, family, TV, youth media, student, music video, experimental, animation, feature, doc, short. Formats: 3/4", 16mm, 35mm, Beta, 1/2", Beta SP, U-matic. Preview on VHS. Entry Fee: \$20 (early, WIDC members); \$30 (final). Contact: Festival; (773) 907-0610; fax: (773) 907-0381; widc@widc.org; www.widc.org.

INTERNATIONAL

AMIENS INT'L FILM FESTIVAL, Nov. 10-20, France. Deadline: July 15 (docs); Aug. 31 (features/animation). Works addressing identity of a people or a minority, racism or issues of representation. In competition, entries must have been completed between Sept. or previous yr. & Oct. of yr. of edition; also must be French premieres. Founded: 1980. Cats: Feature, Short, doc, animation, children. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, Beta, Beta SP. Preview on VHS or DVD. Entry Fee: None. Contact: Jean-Pierre Garcia, artistic dir.; 011 33 3 22 71 35 70; fax: 92 53 04; contact@filmfestamiens.org; www.filmfestamiens.org.

ATHENS INT'L FILM FESTIVAL, Sept. 16-25, Greece. Deadline: July 15. This fest's aim is to reinforce the fest's character, as a cinematographic celebration, & to promote Athens, as a capital of young cinema lovers, where young & restless cinematography is adored. Cats: feature, doc, short, animation. Formats: 16mm, 35mm, Beta SP. Preview on VHS. Entry Fee: None. Contact: Athens Int'l

Film Festival- "Opening Nights"; (011) 30 210 6061689; fax: 210 6014137; festival@pegasus.gr; www.aiff.gr.

BAHIA INT'L FILM FESTIVAL, Sept. 8-15, Brazil. Deadline: June 30 (Competition); July 15 (Market). The Fest is open to Ibero-American prods as well as non-Ibero-American prods about Latin Amer. subjects. Program incl. film & video conquest, retros, symposia & exhibitions, expositions. Market takes place during fest; objective is "to create an alternative space for commercialization & int'l distribution of exp. & ind. film & video prods." Cats: Any style or genre. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, Beta SP. Preview on VHS (max length: 60 min.). Entry Fee: \$50. Contact: Universidade Federal da Bahia; 011 55 71 235 4392; fax: 55 71 336 1680; jornada@ufba.br; www.jornadabahia.cjb.net.

BILBAO INT'L FESTIVAL OF DOC & SHORT FILMS, Nov. 29-Dec. 4, Spain. Deadline: Sept. 1. Cats: short (no longer than 45 min.), doc, animation, experimental. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, Beta SP, DV. Preview on VHS. Entry Fee: None. Contact: Colón de Larreaátegui; 011 (34) 94-424-86-98; fax: 94-424-56-24; info@zinebi.com; www.zinebi.com.

BITE THE MANGO FILM FESTIVAL, September 23-29, UK. Deadline: Aug. 6. Presented by the Nat'l Museum of Photography, Film & Television, this fest is Europe's leading fest for Black & Asian films. Films must have been completed after Jan 1, of previous year. Cats: feature, doc, experimental, short. Formats: Beta SP, 35mm, 16mm, DVD. Preview on VHS (PAL only) or DVD. Entry Fee: none. Contact: Irfan Ajeeb; 44 1274 203 311; irfan.ajeab@nmsi.ac.uk; www.bitethe mango.org.uk.

BRADFORD ANIMATION FESTIVAL, November 16-19, UK. Deadline: July 8. The largest animation fest in the UK, presented by the Nat'l Museum of Photography, Film & Television. At the heart of the fest are the BAF! Awards. Founded: 1994. Cats: animation, experimental, children, family, TV. Formats: 35mm, Beta SP, 16mm, DVD. Preview on VHS. Entry Fee: None. Contact: Lisa Kavanagh; 44 1274 203 408; fax: 770 217; lisa.kavanagh@nmsi.ac.uk; www.baf.org.uk.

BRAUNSCHWEIG INT'L FILM FESTIVAL, Nov. 8-13, Germany. Deadline: Aug. 15. Audience orientated feature film fest w/ 18,000 spectators, showing 60 long feature films, 120 short films. Founded: 1986. Cats: feature, short, children, experimental, animation, doc. Preview on VHS. Entry Fee: None. Contact: Festival; 011 49 (0) 0531-75597; fax: 0531-75523; info@filmfest-braunschweig.de; www.filmfest-braunschweig.de.

CABBAGETOWN SHORT FILM & VIDEO FESTIVAL, Sept. 7, Canada. Deadline: Aug. 3. Fest, held as past of Toronto's Cabbagetown Festival, accepting works under 15 min. Cats: Experimental, Doc, Animation, short. Formats: 1/2". Preview on VHS. Entry Fee: None. Contact: Old Cabbagetown Business Improv. Office; (416) 921-0857; fax: 921-8245; info@oldcabbagetown.com; www.oldcabbagetown.com.

CINEFEST: SUDBURY INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL, September 17-25, Canada. Deadline: July 15. preview on VHS or DVD. Entry Fee: None. Contact: Festival; (705) 688-1234; fax: 688-1351; cinefest@cinefest.com; www.cinefest.com.

CORTO IMOLA FESTIVAL, Dec. 8-12, Italy. Deadline: Aug. 21. Their website describes this fest as "a cultural manifestation" that aims to "express the enormous potential of the short film cinema." Cats: short (under 30 min.);, doc, experimental, animation, fiction. Awards: Cash prizes for the Best in: Doc, Fiction, Animation, & Experimental. Formats: 35mm, Beta SP (PAL), DVD (Zone 1 accepted). Preview on VHS (PAL, NTSC or SECAM). Contact: for June to October Corto Imola Festival; 011(39)0544-464349; fax: 0544-464349; info@cortoimolafestival.it; www.cortoimolafestival.it.

DEAUVILLE FESTIVAL OF AMERICAN FILM, Sept. 2-11, France. Deadline: July 15. Fests mission is "to increase the European audience for American cinema through an extensive presentation of new American films". Fest has three sections: Premieres; Competition (shorts & features) & Panorama (non-competitive) & Doc (non-competitive). Cats: feature, short. Formats: 35mm. Preview on VHS or DVD. Entry Fee: None. Contact: c/o Le Public Système Cinéma; 011 33 41 34 2033;

fax: 41 34 2077; jlasserre@le-public-sys
teme.fr; www.festival-deauville.com.

EXGROUND FILMFEST, Nov. 11-20, Germany. Deadline: Aug. 1. Non-competitive fest seeks "American independents, films from the Far East, shorts, music films, trash & more" for event outside the mainstream. Competition European production & German shorts. Founded: 1990. Cats: feature, doc, short, animation, experimental, music video. Formats: 16mm, 35mm, Beta SP, super 8. Preview on VHS (NTSC or PAL). Entry Fee: None. Contact: Andrea Wink; 011 49 611 174 8227; fax: 174 8228; info@exground.com; www.exground.com.

FANTASTISK FILM FESTIVAL: LUND INT'L FILM FESTIVAL, Sept. 16-25, Sweden. Deadline: July 30. The only int'l film fest in Scandinavia totally devoted to the cinema of the fantastic: science-fiction, fantasy, horror, & thriller. Cats: feature, doc, short, animation. Awards: Melies d'Argent/Best European Fantastic Film (feature, short), Audience Prize (feature, live-action short, animation short). Formats: 16mm, 35mm, DV (PAL), Beta SP (PAL). Preview on VHS (PAL or NTSC) or DVD. Entry Fee: None (shorts have to pay their own freight). Contact: Mats-Ola Nilsson; 011 46 46 132 135; fax: 132 139; info@fff.se; www.fff.se.

FILMFEST HAMBURG, Sept. 22-29, Germany. Deadline: July 24. The Fest is Germany's major cinematic events. The programme of about 100 titles shows a distinctive mixture of mainstream cinema, art-house & films of up-and-coming directors. Founded: 1969. Cats: feature, doc, animation, digital productions. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, Beta. Preview on VHS. Entry Fee: None. Contact: Festival; 011 49 399 19 00 0; fax: 40 399 19 00 10; office@filmfesthamburg.de; www.filmfesthamburg.de.

FLANDERS INT'L FILM FESTIVAL- GHENT, Oct. 11-22, Belgium. Deadline: Aug 10. Fest originated in 1973 w/ focus on music in film. Int'l jury selects winners from features from around the world (many of them w/out a Belgian distribution). Fest incl. films from all over the world, mainly focusing on fiction films & to lesser extent on docs. Founded: 1973. Cats: feature, doc, short. Formats:

16mm, 35mm, 70mm, Beta SP, DigiBeta. Preview on VHS (PAL or NTSC). Entry Fee: None. Contact: Wim De Witte c/o les Citadines; 011 32 478 20 20 02; info@filmfestival.be; www.filmfestival.be.

GIJON INT'L FILM FESTIVAL FOR YOUNG PEOPLE, Nov. 24- Dec. 2, Spain. Deadline: Sept. 23. Member of FIAPF & European Coordination of Film Festivals. Festival aims to present the newest tendencies of young cinema worldwide. Founded: 1962. Cats: Feature, Short, Children. Formats: 35mm, 16mm. Preview on VHS or DVD. Entry Fee: None. Contact: Jose Luis Cienfuegos, Festival Director; 011 34 98 518 2940; fax: 34 98 518 2944; festivalgijon@telecable.es; www.gijonfilmfestival.com.

GLOBAL VISIONS FILM FESTIVAL, Nov. 3-6, Canada. Deadline: July 31. GVFF presents documentary films on social & environmental issues. Formats: Beta SP, DVD, 35mm, 16mm. Preview on VHS or DVD (NTSC). Entry Fee: \$25. Contact: GVFF; (780) 414-1052; entries@globalvisionsfestival.com; globalvisionsfestival.com.

HAMBURG LESBIAN AND GAY FILM FESTIVAL, Oct. 11-16, Germany. Deadline: Aug. 1. Festival seeks work of all lengths & genres. Cats: any style or genre, feature, doc, short. Formats: super 8, 16mm, 1/2", 35mm, S-VHS, U-matic, Beta SP, DVD. Preview on VHS or DVD. Entry Fee: No entry fee. Contact: Querbild E.V., Joachim Post; 011 49 0 40 348 06 70; fax: 34 05 22; mail@lsf-hamburg.de; www.lsf-hamburg.de.

INTERFILM BERLIN-INT'L SHORT FILM FESTIVAL BERLIN, Nov. 1-6, Germany. Deadline: July 16. Fest is the int'l short film event of Berlin. Films & videos no longer than 20 min. are eligible. There is no limit as to the yr. of production. Founded: 1982. Cats: doc, short, animation, experimental, children. Awards: 15 prizes in various cats. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, Beta SP. Preview on VHS (PAL/SECAM/NTSC) or DVD. Entry Fee: None. Contact: Heinz Hermanns; 011 49 30 693 29 59; fax: 49 30 693 29 59; festival@interfilm.de; www.interfilm.de.

INT'L PANORAMA FOR INDEPENDENT FILMMAKERS, Sept. 25 - Oct. 1, Greece.

Deadline: August 1. This fest aims to bring attention to the glory of the 7th art by bringing together a global community of filmmakers & filmgoers. A special focus is drawn to the local community in tone & special prizes. Cats: feature, short, doc, animation, experimental. Formats: Beta cam, VHS, DV cam, Beta, DVD, Mini-DV, 1/2". Preview on VHS or DVD. Entry Fee: None. Contact: Chionidis Panagiotis; 011 32310 959 4931; fax: 959 4936; info@independent.gr; www.independent.gr.

KASSEL DOC FILM & VIDEO FESTIVAL, Nov. 8-13, Germany. Deadline: Aug. 1. This fest aims to celebrate the art of documentary filmmaking in it's six day fest. Cats: doc, feature, short, installation. Awards: Cash Prizes range from 2,500 euros to 3,000 euros. Formats: 16mm, 35mm, DV, DVD, S-VHS, Betacam. Preview on VHS or DVD (NTSC or PAL). Entry Fee: None. Contact: c/o Filmladen Kassel E.V.; 011 49 561 707 64 12; fax: 707 64 41; dokfest@filmladen.de; www.filmladen.de/dokfest.

KINOFILM/MANCHESTER INT'L SHORT FILM & VIDEO FESTIVAL, Feb. 27- March 6, England. Deadline: July 16. Entry is open to anyone in the film making community incl. first time film makers. Founded: 1993. Cats: Short, Animation, Experimental, music video, student, children, doc, any style or genre. Formats: 35mm, Beta SP, Mini-DV, DVD. Preview on VHS. Entry Fee: 5 pounds UK (5 Euros or US \$10). Contact: John Wojowski, Fest Dir; 011 44 161 288 2494; fax: 161 281 1374; kino.submissions@good.co.uk; www.kinofilm.org.uk.

LEIPZIG INT'L FESTIVAL FOR DOC & ANIMATED FILMS, Oct. 3-9, Germany. Deadline: July 22. Founded: 1955. Cats: doc, animation, TV. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, Beta SP, DigiBeta. Preview on VHS or DVD. Entry Fee: None. Contact: Gerol Wernes Schnabel; 011 49 341 9 80 39 21; fax: 9 80 61 41; info@dokfestival-leipzig.de; www.dokfestival-leipzig.de.

LES ECRANS DE L'AVEVENTURE/INT'L FESTIVAL OF ADVENTURE FILM, Oct. 14-16, France. Deadline: July 15. Held in Dijon, fest is a showcase for recent adventure-themed docs. Cats: doc, children. Formats: Beta SP

(PAL). Preview on VHS (PAL, Secam) or DVD. Entry Fee: None. Contact: Cléo Poussier; 011 33 1 43 26 97 52; fax: 33 1 46 34 75 45; aventure@la-gilde.org.

LONDON FILM FESTIVAL, Oct. 19 - Nov. 3, UK. Deadline: July 15. Overall, 180 int'l features & 100 short films showcased. Extensive media coverage & audiences over 110,000. Entries must be UK premieres, produced w/in preceding 18 months. Founded: 1957. Cats: short, animation, feature, doc, any style or genre, children. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, 8mm, 3/4", super 8, 70mm. Preview on VHS. Entry Fee: None. Contact: Sarah Lutton; 011 44 20 7815 1322; fax: 44 20 7633 0786; sarah.lutton@bfi.org.uk; www.lff.org.uk.

MONTPELLIER INT'L FESTIVAL OF MEDITERRANEAN FILM, Oct. 21-30, France. Deadline: July 15 (shorts, docs); Aug. 31 (fiction features). Competitive fest seeking works of fiction by directors from the Mediterranean Basin, the Black Sea states, Portugal or Armenia which address the cultural representation of the areas. Fest offers a development aid grant to a single feature-length film. Cats: Feature, Short, doc. Formats: 16mm, 35mm, Video for docs & experimental. Preview on VHS or DVD. Entry Fee: None. Contact: Cinéma Méditerranée; 011 33 499 13 73 73; fax: 011 33 499 13 73 74; info@cinemed.tm.fr; www.cinemed.tm.fr.

MONTREAL WORLD FILM FESTIVAL, Aug. 25-Sept. 5, Canada. Deadline: June 23 (shorts); July 30 (Features). Features in competition must be prod in 12 months preceding fest, not released commercially outside of country of origin & not entered in any competitive int'l film fest (unreleased films given priority). Shorts must be 70mm or 35mm & must not exceed 15 min. Founded: 1977. Cats: feature, short, any style or genre. Formats: 35mm, 70mm, DVD, Video. Preview on VHS. Entry Fee: none. Contact: Serge Losique,

Fest Dir.; (514) 848-3883; 848-9933; fax: 848-3886; info@ffm-montreal.org; www.ffm-montreal.org.

NORDIC FILM DAYS LUBECK, Nov. 4-7, Germany. Deadline: Aug. 20. This fest aims to promote Scandinavian & Baltic filmmakers. Cats: short, feature. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, Beta SP. Preview on VHS. Entry Fee: none. Contact: Janina Prosek; 011 0451 122 1742; fax: 0451 122 1799; janina.prosek@filmtage.luebeck.de; www.filmtage.luebeck.de.

OURENSE INT'L INDEPENDENT FILM FESTIVAL, Nov. 12-19, Spain. Deadline: July 31. Fest accepts works in all genres & languages to compete for cash prizes. Founded: 1996. Cats: feature, doc, short, experimental, animation. Formats: 35mm, 1/2", Beta SP. Preview on VHS. Entry Fee: None. Contact: Patricia Iglesias; 011 34 988 224 127; fax: 34 988 296 9619; oufest@ourencine.com; www.ourencine.com.

REGENSBURG SHORT FILM WEEK, Nov. 16-23, Germany. Deadline: Aug. 1. Regensburg revels in the unique aesthetic of the short film in it's week-long fest. Cats: short (under 30 min. only). Formats: 35mm, 16mm, 8mm, S-VHS, DVD, DV, 1/2", Beta SP. Preview on VHS. Entry Fee: None. Contact: Festival; 011 49 941 56 09 01; fax: 941 56 07 16; info@kurzfilmwoche.de; www.regenzburg-er-kurzfilmwoche.de.

SÃO PAULO INT'L FILM FESTIVAL, Oct. 21-Nov. 3, Brazil. Deadline: Aug 9. Founded: 1979. Cats: feature, doc, short. Formats: 35mm, 16mm. Preview on VHS or DVD. Entry Fee: None. Contact: Festival; 011 55 11 3141 2548; fax: 55-11-3266-7066; info@mostra.org; www.mostra.org.

SHORT CUTS COLOGNE, Nov. 30 - Dec. 4, Germany. Deadline: July 30. Int'l competition welcomes filmmakers from around the globe

to submit their films. Cats: doc, short, experimental, animation, children, any style or genre. Formats: Super 8, 16mm, 35mm, DVD, S-VHS, Beta SP, DV, 1/2". Preview on VHS or DVD. Entry Fee: None. Contact: Festival; 011 49 221 222 710 27; fax: 222 710 99; scc@koelner-filmhaus.de; www.short-cuts-cologne.de.

SHORT SHORTS FILM FESTIVAL, May-Aug., Japan. Deadline: Aug. 1. SSFF (Formerly American Shorts) was founded to promote cultural exchange between the United States & Japan. Seeks shorts under 25 min. that were produced since January of previous year. Cats: short. Preview on VHS NTSC only.. Entry Fee: No entry fees. Contact: Katy O'Connell, Prog. Asst; (310) 656-9767; fax: same; look@shortshorts.org; www.shortshorts.org.

SPORT MOVIES & TV, Oct. 27-Nov. 1, Italy. Deadline: July 30. Fest dubs itself "the most important Worldwide fest dedicated to sports television & movies." Preview on VHS. Entry Fee: 60 Euros; 011 39 02 894 090 76; fax: 837 59 73; info@sportmoviestv.com; www.sportmoviestv.com.

TAIWAN INT'L CHILDREN'S TV & FILM FESTIVAL, Jan. 13-17, Taiwan. Deadline: August 20. Cats: children, feature, animation, TV, doc. Formats: Beta SP, 16mm, 35mm. Entry Fee: None. Contact: Gary Sheu; 011 886 2 2630 1137; fax: 2630 1854; kuojensheu@yahoo.com.tw; www.tictff.org.tw.

TOKYO FILMEX, Nov. 19-27, Japan. Deadline: July 31. Founded: 2000. Cats: features by Asian directors. Awards: Grand Prize, Special Jury Prize. Formats: 35mm, 16mm. Preview on VHS (all formats). Entry Fee: None. Contact: TOKYO FILMeX office; 81 3 3560 6393; fax: 3 3586 0201; info@filmex.net; www.filmex.net.

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ARE YOU STUCK? Fernanda Rossi, script & documentary doctor, specializes in narrative structure in all stages of the filmmaking process, including story development, fundraising trailers and post-production. She has doctored over 30 films and is the author of *Trailer Mechanics*. For private consultations and workshops visit www.documentarydoctor.com or write to info@documentarydoctor.com.

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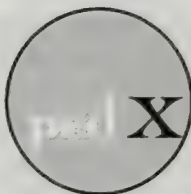
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BetaSP. Call George @ 212-620-0084.

OPPORTUNITIES/GIGS

COORDINATOR BIG MUDDY FILM FESTIVAL.

Southern Illinois University Carbondale College of Mass Communication and Media Arts. Bachelor's degree in film, media studies, or related field, two years experience in supervisory position including direct experience in budgeting, personnel management, and planning required. Evidence of excellent written and verbal communication skills, familiarity with grant writing/fundraising processes in the arts or humanities required. Evidence of leadership role in community service oriented activity preferred. The Coordinator supervises all aspects of the planning and execution of the Festival including matters of budget, staffing, and scheduling; engages in researching and applying for grants and funding; supervises student staff; manages community relations and outreach; and performs duties as assigned in support of the Festival and related College activities. The Big Muddy Film Festival presents an annual media event that honors innovative independent film and video work celebrating and analyzing a complex, diverse, and challenging world. It is unique for the region and special in times that give primary attention to the entertainment industry and corporate control of media. Application Deadline: July 31, 2005, or until filled. Only applications by mail will be considered. Send letter of application, resume, and three letters of recommendation to: Professor Mike Covell, Search Committee Chair, Coordinator "Big Muddy Film Festival, Department of Cinema and Photography, Southern Illinois University Carbondale" Mail Code 6610, Carbondale, IL 62901. SIUC is an affirmative action/equal opportunity employer that strives to enhance its ability to develop a diverse faculty and staff and to increase its potential to serve a diverse student population. All applications are welcomed and encouraged and will receive consideration.

DHTV, a progressive, nonprofit community media center and TV station in St. Louis, MO seeks works by indie producers. Half hour and 1 hour lengths. S-VHS accepted, DVD preferred. Nonexclusive rights release upon acceptance. No pay but exposure to 60,000 cable households. Contact Mariah Richardson, dhTV, 625 N. Euclid, St. Louis, Mo 63108, 314.361.8870 x230, mariah@dhtv.org.

LOOKING FOR A GREAT STORY SET IN THE HEARTLAND? See, "How High Is A Robin's Nest?" At www.ronniebooks.com.

POSTPRODUCTION

BRODSKY & TREADWAY: film-to-tape transfers, wet-gate, scene-by-scene, reversal film only. Camera original Regular 8mm, Super 8, and 16mm. For appointment call (978) 948-7985.

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PRODUCTION TRANSCRIPTS: Verbatim transcription service for documentaries, journalists, film and video. Low prices & flat rates based on tape length. www.productiontranscripts.com for details or call: (888) 349-3022.

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SCRIPT/STORY/CREATIVE CONSULTANT w/ 8 years Miramax experience, Maureen Nolan offers a full range of consulting services for writers and filmmakers. Script consults, coaching, story development, rewrites, etc. 212-663-9389 or 917-620-6502.

WEB

WEB SITE DESIGNER: Create multimedia web sites, integrating video, sound, and special effects, that promote your films and/or your company. www.sabineprobstdesign.com. Info: Sabine Probst, phone: 646-226-7881, email: sabine@spromo.net.



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NOTICES

By Lindsay Gelfand

Noncommercial notices are listed free of charge as space permits. *The Independent* reserves the right to edit for length and makes no guarantees about duration of listing. Limit submissions to 60 words and indicate how long your information will be current. Listings must be submitted to notices@aivf.org by the first of the month two months prior to cover date (e.g., Sept. 1 for Nov. issue). Remember to give us complete contact info (name, address, and phone number). Listings do not constitute an endorsement by *The Independent* or AIVF. We try to be as current and accurate as possible, but nevertheless, double-check details before sending anyone anything.

COMPETITIONS

2005 SANTA BARBARA SCRIPT COMPETITION

seeks submissions. Entry fee \$40. Grand Prize \$2000 Option, First Prize \$750. All winners will also receive screenwriting related books, materials and or software. Special Cash Award for Regional Writer to be awarded to a South Coast Resident. (Santa Barbara, Ventura, San Luis Obispo counties in California). Regular submission deadline is June 30th and late is July 31. Contact: Geoff@santabarbarascript.com or visit www.santabarbarascript.com.

THE AMATEUR MOVIE MAKERS ASSOCIATION

seeks submissions for their Magic Moments Contest. Films should be one minute (or less) video and submit it on VHS tape on or before August 5, 2005. You'll have a chance to be the winner or one of the two runner-ups selected by a panel of experienced judges. Please visit their website for more information: www.ammaweb.org.

CONFERENCES / WORKSHOPS

COMIC-CON INTERNATIONAL is the largest gathering of comic book, science fiction, film and television fans in the nation. Featuring celebrity guests, seminars on breaking into filmmaking and near 24-hour film retrospectives. Comic-Con is the place for fans of all things pop culture. For more information, visit www.comic-con.org.

THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF TELEVISION PROGRAM EXECUTIVES is producing the 3rd

Annual TV Producers' Boot Camp, July 28-29, 2005, in West Hollywood. The TV Producers' Boot Camp is an interactive, one and a half day event with the goal of providing "inside information" on how the TV industry really works. Through panels, sessions and workshops as well as the Boot Camp Pitch Pit, where participants get face time with agents and production executives, attendees get real access to real pros in real time! If you have any questions, please visit NATPE website at www.natpe.org or contact Pamela.

SILVERMAN AT (310) 453-4440. REEL VISION FILM-MAKERS' CONFERENCE October 21-23, 2005, Radisson Hotel, City Center Tucson, Arizona. In this competitive industry, filmmakers need an edge to break in. That edge is having an outstanding script and an innovative voice. Linda Seger is just one of the world class screenwriting and filmmaking instructors teaching attendees how to express their unique vision on film. Registration: \$100, www.reelinspiration.org, 520-325-9175.

RESOURCES / FUNDS

ALTER-CINE FOUNDATION will award a one-time grant of \$10,000 to a video or filmmaker to assist in the production of a documentary project. The grant is aimed at young video and filmmakers from Africa, Asia and Latin America who want to direct a film in the language of their choice. Application must be post paid to: Foundation Alter-Cine 5371 avenue de l'Esplanade Montreal, QC CANADA H2T 2Z8 Only application received before Aug. 15, 2005 will be accepted—please visit

www.sextans.com/altercine/ or email altercine@ca.tc.

FOR MORE INFORMATION.ARTISTS' FELLOWSHIPS

are \$7,000 cash awards made to individual originating artists living and working in the state of New York for use in career development. Grants are awarded in 16 artistic disciplines, with applications accepted in eight categories each year. The next deadline for Artists' Fellowships is Monday, October 3, 2005. At that time we will be accepting applications in the following categories: Architecture/ Environmental Structures, Choreography, Fiction, Music Composition, Painting, Photography, Playwriting/ Screenwriting, and Video. To learn more about Artists' Fellowships visit our website at: www.nyfa.org/afp. Applications for the remaining categories—Computer Arts, Crafts, Film, Nonfiction Literature, Performance Art/ Multidisciplinary Work, Poetry, Printmaking Drawing/Artists' Books, and Sculpture—will be accepted in early October 2006.

BOSTON FILM/VIDEO FOUNDATION - Seeks proposals for fiscal sponsorship from indie producers. No deadline or genre restrictions. Contact BFFV for brochure: Cherie Martin, 1126 Boylston St., Boston, MA 02215; (617) 536-1540; fax: 536-3576; www.bffv@aol.com.

CALIFORNIA ARTS COUNCIL offers various grants & programs for performing arts. Contact: CA Arts Council, 1300 1 St, Ste. 930, Sacramento, CA 95814; (916) 322-6555; (800) 201-6201; fax: 322-6575; cac@cwo.com; www.cac.ca.gov.

CHICAGO UNDERGROUND FILM FUND Grants awarded to selected film or video makers for post-production on works-in-progress that are in keeping with the festival's mission to promote works that push boundaries, defy commercial expectations and transcend the mainstream of independent filmmaking. Grants: between \$500 and \$2,000 Chicago Underground Film Festival 3109 North Western Ave. Chicago, IL 60618 (phone) 773-327-FILM (fax) 773-327-3464 Email: info@cuff.org. Website: www.cuff.org.

CROSSPOINT FOUNDATION seeks to reduce discrimination and foster understanding and tolerance amongst all peoples. The Crosspoint Foundation specifically supports projects in the areas of: Education, the arts, societal concerns, indigenous issues, intellectual property rights, religion, family, general cultural issues. Supporting the production and dissemination of documentary film, dramatic works, CDs or other media; supporting public film, arts, and cultural festivals; facilitating public discussion and debate; encouraging and supporting educational activities; encouraging and supporting domestic and international exchanges. Grants in the range of \$500-\$2,000. The Crosspoint Foundation, Inc. 12322 W. 64th, PMB #118 Arvada, CO 80004. Phone: 303.902.2072. FAX 603.737.3388 Email: info@crosspointfoundation.org. http://crosspointfoundation.org.

ILLINOIS ARTS COUNCIL SPECIAL ASSISTANCE ARTS PROGRAM Matching grants of up to \$1,500 avail. to IL artists for specific projects such as registration fees & travel to attend conferences, seminars, or workshops; consultant fees for resolution of specific artistic problems; exhibits, performances, publications, screenings; materials, supplies, or services. Apps. must be received at least 8 wks prior to project starting date. Degree students not eligible. (312) 814-6570 toll-free in IL (800) 237-6994; www.ilarts@artswire.org.

JOHN D. & CATHERINE T. MACARTHUR FOUNDATION Grants support public interest media projects, including independent documentary film, that advance the broad purposes of the Foundation: Human and Community Development and Global

Security and Sustainability. John D. & Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation 149 S. Dearborn St., Suite 1100, Chicago, IL 60603 (phone) 312-726-8000; www.macfound.org.


MEDIA ARTS TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE FUND is designed to help non-profit media arts programs in New York State stabilize, strengthen or restructure their media arts organizational capacity, services and activities. The fund will provide up to \$2,000 per project to organizations which receive support from NYSCA's Electronic Media and Film program. The Media Arts Technical Assistance fund can assist with the hiring of consultants or other activities which contribute to organizational, management and programming issues which influence the media arts activities. Contact Sherry Miller Hocking, Program Director at Experimental Television Center deadlines for application are January 1, 2005; April 1, July 1, and October 1.

PAUL ROBESON FUND for Independent Media Film/video projects that will reach a broad audience with an organizing component and can demonstrate that the production will be used for social change organizing. Grants: Up to \$15,000; most \$3,000-\$6,000 Paul Robeson Fund for Independent Media The Funding Exchange 666 Broadway, Suite 500 New York, NY 10012 212-529-5300 (fax) 212-982-9272 Email: trinh.h.duong@fex.org Website: www.fex.org/2.3_grantmakingindex.html.

THE ANTHONY RADZIWIŁL DOCUMENTARY FUND Grants to emerging and established documentary filmmakers in the form of development funds (seed money) for specific new projects. Administered by IFP/New York, the Fund seeks to provide an additional much-needed source of funding for independent non-fiction filmmakers at the earliest stage of new work, traditionally a difficult point at which to secure funding. The Fund is named in memory of the late Anthony Radziwiłł, an Emmy Award-winning documentary producer. Anthony Radziwiłł Documentary Fund IFP/New York 104 West 29th Street, 12th Floor New York, NY 10001 Phone: 212-465-8200 x 830 Email: docfund@ifp.org. Website: http://market.ifp.org/newyork/docfund.

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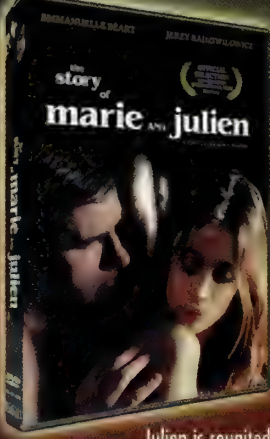


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THE FRAMELINE COMPLETION FUND encourages lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender film and videomakers to apply to Frameline for the Frameline Film & Video Completion Fund. Grants in a range of \$3,000 to \$5,000 are available once annually for projects in the final stages of production. The Frameline Completion Fund was established in 1991 to assist artists in the final stages of production. Applications are available in August and grants are awarded annually in December.

THE FREESOUND PROJECT is a website which aims to create a huge collaborative database of audio snippets, samples, recordings, bleeps, all released under the Creative Commons Sampling Plus License. The Freesound Project provides new and interesting ways of accessing these samples, allowing users to browse the sounds in new ways using keywords, up and download sounds to and from the database (under the same creative commons license), and interact with fellow sound-artists. <http://freesound.iaa.upf.edu/index.php>.

THE LEEWAY FOUNDATION, which supports individual women artists, arts programs, and arts organizations in the Greater Philadelphia region, has announced the Art and Change Grants provide immediate, short-term grants of up to \$2,500 to women artists in the Philadelphia region who need financial assistance to take advantage of opportunities for art and change. The artist's opportunity for change must be supported by or be in collaboration with a Change Partner: a person, organization, or business that is providing the opportunity or is a part of the opportunity in some way. Eligible Change Partners include mentors, editors, galleries, community art spaces, theaters, nonprofit organizations, film studios, and clubs. (Art and Change Grant Deadlines: April 11, June 20, and October 31, 2005.) Visit the Leeway Foundation website for grantmaking guidelines and application forms.

THE NATIONAL FOUNDATION FOR JEWISH CULTURE is inviting proposals for the Fund for Jewish Cultural Preservation (FJCP). Two types of proposals will be considered: 1) institutional projects or programs — that is, projects that address the needs of a specific agency; and 2) field-wide projects, which

serve the needs of a field, and which might be brought by an aggregate or consortium of agencies. The fund recommends a "ceiling" of \$50,000 per year for grant requests and encourages requests with multiple sources of matching support. Visit the National Foundation for Jewish Culture Web site for complete program information. Deadline: July 14, 2005.

VSA ARTS, an international nonprofit organization dedicated to the participation of people with disabilities in the arts, has announced "Shifting Gears," an annual call for art and juried exhibit made possible with the support of Volkswagen of America, Inc. Now in its fourth year, the program will distribute \$60,000 in cash awards (including a grand prize of \$20,000) to a total of fifteen finalists with disabilities. Finalists will be selected on aesthetic merit alone. Visit www.vsarts.org for more information. Application deadline: July 15, 2005.

WIGGLYWORLD GRANTS offers three distinct grant programs. Each program is designed to help ease the financial burden of making a film, allowing the filmmaker to more fully pursue artistic goals. The Roll Camera Grant provides grantees with use of WigglyWorld's 16mm production package; the Out of the Can Grant provides this same access plus the use of the organization's 16mm analog post-production facilities; the New Model Edit grant provides access to a non-linear post-production suite, and there are also programs granting financial assistance for insurance and rentals. Washington State residents only. Northwest Film Forum and Wiggly World Studios, 1515 12th Ave, Seattle WA 98122, T: (206) 329-2629, Fax: (206) 329-1193, www.nwfilmforum.org/wigglyworld/grants.shtml. Call for next deadline.

WOMEN MAKE MOVIES is putting together a list of women looking for projects to produce or co-produce. We often get request from our filmmakers from around the world for suggestions for an American producer or co-producer and would love to help facilitate relationships and bring skilled professionals to great projects! If you would like to be on this list, please send you name, contact information and brief bio (including current projects, specify narrative or doc) to: fsprogram@wmm.com.

MICROCINEMA / SCREENING SERIES

FILM AND VIDEO 825 Series of bi-monthly screenings of locally, nationally and internationally recognized film and video artists' work, providing a forum for presenting experimental film and video in Los Angeles. In a city dominated by Hollywood, venues such as ours become a necessity for artists working in time-based media that is outside the mainstream of narrative cinema. Our curatorial vision is open to both shorts and features in experimental, performance, animation, and documentary forms. Film/Video 825, Gallery 825/LAAA, 825 N. La Cienega Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90069, T: (310) 652-8272, Fax: (310) 652-9251, gallery825@laaa.org, www.laaa.org/calendar/film_video.html.

ROOFTOP FILMS summer series is underway every Friday at the Automotive High School: 50 Bedford Ave [at Lorimer, in Williamsburg Brooklyn] and Saturdays [through July 16th] on the roof of the Old American Can Factory at 232 3rd St. [Gowanus/Park Slope]. Special Shows Monday July 4 and Thursday August 4. For information, please visit www.rooftopfilms.com or email Dan Nuxoll, programming director, at submit@rooftopfilms.com.

BROADCAST / CABLECAST

THE DOCUMENTARY CHANNEL is a new digital cable channel dedicated to airing, exclusively, the works of the independent documentary filmmaker. There isn't a single type of documentary that they will not show, and they are not afraid of controversy. That said, they prefer the edgier, more personal films that tell a story and that show something in a unique, visual manner. See the website for submission instructions. Submissions accepted on a rolling basis. Please visit <http://documentarychannel.com/index.htm> for more information or programs@documentarychannel.com.

WORK WANTED

By Lindsay Gelfand

Noncommercial notices are listed free of charge as space permits. *The Independent* reserves the right to edit for length and makes no guarantees about duration of listing. Limit submissions to 60 words and indicate how long your information will be current. Listings must be submitted to notices@ivf.org by the first of the month two months prior to cover date (e.g., Sept. 1 for Nov issue). Remember to give us complete contact info (name, address, and phone number). Listings do not constitute an endorsement by *The Independent* or AIVF. We try to be as current and accurate as possible, but nevertheless double-check details before sending anyone anything.

4TH ANNUAL BARE BONES SCRIPT-2-SCREEN FEST & SCREENWRITERS CONFERENCE in Tulsa, OK is looking for independent screenwriters & filmmakers to enter competition in variety of categories: feature screenplays & movies, short movies & screenplays, teleplays, trailers, doc., animation, actor monologues, Shoot 'N OK location micro-screenplay will get produced. Submission Deadline for the Festival, which will take place between October 13-16 is July 31, 2005. For more details email script2screenfest@yahoo.com or visit www.script2screenfilmfestival.com.

6TH ANNUAL DV FILM FESTIVAL takes place December 2005 during the week of Digital Video Expo West in Los Angeles. Established in 2000, the DV Film Festival celebrates emerging talent by screening independent digital films with intriguing subject matter, robust scripts, and foresights that push the digital envelope. We only accept entries shot in digital video or high-definition formats. We do not accept entries that already have a theatrical distribution deal in place. We do not accept works in progress. Feature entries must be AT LEAST 80 minutes in length. Short entries must be 15 MINUTES or less. Final selections will be exhibited at the 2005 DV Film Festival held the week of DV Expo West 2005 in Los Angeles, California. For more info, see www.dvexpo.com/filmfest/. Reduced fees for entries submitted by 1st August 2005.

CELLULOID SOCIAL CLUB is a monthly screening series in Vancouver featuring the best in independent provocative short & feature

films & videos followed by fun & frolic. Hosted by Ken Hegan at the ANZA Club, #3 West 8th Ave., Vancouver, BC. No minors. Prizes galore. For more info call (604) 730-8090 or email celluloid@shaw.ca; www.CelluloidSocialClub.com.

HORROR FILM CONTEST. The Hollywood Investigator seeks short & feature horror films for its annual NO ENTRY FEE contest. Deadline: mid-October. Films arriving after that are considered for next year's contest. Details: www.hollywoodinvestigator.com/tinsel/horrorcontest.htm www.hollywoodinvestigator.com/tinsel/horrorcontest.htm.

OCULARIS provides a forum for film & video makers to exhibit their work at Brooklyn's Galapagos Art & Performance Space. All works are considered for programming in the weekly series, travelling programs & other special projects. Local film/video makers can submit works under 15 min. to Open Zone, a quarterly open screening. Nat'l/int'l works & medium length works (15-45 min.) will be considered for curated group shows. For submission guidelines & other info, visit www.ocularis.net; shortfilms@ocularis.net.

STREET MOVIES! is a year-round screening series presented by Philadelphia's Scribe Video Center. Free series tours Philly neighborhoods throughout the year & offers a program of indy cinema to the general public w/ a forum for dialogue. Prefer social issue, thought-provoking work of any genre or style as well as kid-friendly pieces. Must be under 60 mins & will receive an honorarium if

selected. Founded: 1997. Send 1/2" VHS or DVD w/ synopsis and contact info. Contact: Phil Rothberg, Program Coordinator; 215-222-4201; stmovies@scribe.org; www.scribe.org.

THE TERRURIDE STUDENT SYMPOSIUM is part of the Telluride Film Festival (Sept. 2-5) held in Telluride, CO and seeks "a cross-section of the college and university student population to attend a rigorous, free-form program of screenings and discussions of film." College students studying in any program major eligible; only 50 students selected nationwide. Symposium participants awarded a \$200 stipend and entry into festival's opening night and other events. Travel, lodging, and other ancillary cost are not provided. Applicants must submit essay and one instructor or advisor recommendation. Late Deadline: July 15, 2005. Please visit <http://telluridefilmfestival.com> for more information.

VERSUSMEDIA is seeking entries for their first ever "Film Versus Music" ten minute film short contest starting on June 1st. Just as the name says, we want this film short contest to glorify the usage of music in film! It is our hope that this contest will help spread the benefit of musicians and filmmakers working together with a common goal, exposure. Usage of music in film can come from a wide range of film topics and genres, so we are not requiring a set theme to the film submissions. For further information regarding this contest, please visit the following webpage. www.versusmedia.com/contest.php.

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All workshops are solely owned and operated by the New York Film Academy and are not affiliated with Harvard University, Princeton University, Universal or Disney-MGM Studios. *Summer only.

THANK YOU

The Association of Independent Video and Filmmakers (AIVF) provides a wide range of programs and services for independent moving image makers and the media community, including *The Independent* and a series of resource publications, seminars and workshops, information services, and arts and media policy advocacy.

None of this work would be possible without the generous support of the AIVF membership and the following organizations:

We also wish to thank the following individuals and organizational members:



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NONPROFIT MEMBERS: AR: Henderson State University; AZ: Pan Left Productions; CA: Bay Area Video Coalition; California Newsreel; Everyday Gandhi Project; Film Arts Foundation; International Buddhist Film Festival; NAATA/Media Fund; NALIP; Sundance Institute; USC School of Cinema and TV; CO: Denver Center Media; Free Speech TV; CT: Hartley Film Foundation; DC: American University School of Communication; CINE; FL: Miami International Film Festival; University of Tampa; GA: Image Film and Video Center; HI: Pacific Islanders in Communications; IL: Art Institute of Chicago (Video Data Bank); Community Television Network; Department of Communication/NLU; Kartemquin Films; IN: Fort Wayne Cinema Center; KY: Appalshop; MA: CCTV; Documentary Educational Resources; Harvard University, OsCLibrary; LTC; MD: Laurel Cable Network; Silverdocs; AFI Discovery Channel Doc Festival; ME: Maine Photographic Workshop; MI: Ann Arbor Film Festival; MN: IFF/MSP; Walker Art Center; MO: dhTV; Webster University Film Series; NC: Broadcasting/Cinema; Calcalorus Film Foundation; Duke University, Film & Video Dept.; NE: Nebraska Independent Film Project/AIVF Salon Lincoln; NJ: Black Maria Film Festival; Capriole Productions; Freedom Film Society, Inc.; Princeton University, Program in Visual Arts; NM: Girls Film School; University of New

Mexico; NY: ActNow Productions; Arts Engine; Cornell Cinema; Council for Positive Images, Inc.; Creative Capital Foundation; Crowing Rooster Arts; Dutchess Community College Student Activites; Educational Video Center; Experimental TV Center; Film Forum; Film Society of Lincoln Center; Firelight Media; International Film Seminars; LMC-TV; Manhattan Neighborhood Network; National Black Touring Circuit; National Black Programming Consortium; National Museum of the American Indian; National Video Resources; New York University, Cinema Studies; New York Women in Film and Television; Parnassus Works; POV/The American Documentary; RIT School of Film and Animation; Squeaky Wheel; Standby Program; Stonestreet Studios Film and TV Acting Workshop; Stony Brook Film Festival; Syracuse University; United Community Centers; Upstate Films, Ltd.; Witness; Women Make Movies; OH: Athens Center for Film And Video; Independent Pictures/AIVF Ohio Salon; Media Bridges Cincinnati; School of Film, Ohio University; Wexner Center; OR: Northest Film Center; The Oregon Film & Video Foundation; PA: American INSIGHT, Inc.; American Poetry Center; Philadelphia Independent Film & Video Assoc. (PIFVA); TeamChildren.com; RI: Flickers Arts Collaborative; SC: Department of Art, University of South Carolina; South Carolina Arts Commission; TX: Austin Film Society; Southwest Alternate Media Project; UT: Sundance Institute; WA: Seattle Central Community College; Canada: Banff Centre Library; France: The Carmago Foundation

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THE LIST

SURPASSING SUBTITLES

By Lindsay Gelfand

How and why do foreign films feel and look different than American films?

"I believe it has to do with language. Different languages create different thought processes in every culture. When these cultures speak the universal cinematic language—image and sound—each filmmaker from their respective culture uses these elements in a different way to tell a story."

—Josh Hyde, writer/director, *Chicle*

"First of all, foreign films are a misnomer and can't be lumped into a single category. Indian cinema is different from Hong Kong cinema...and on and on. There is no single way in which foreign cinema is aesthetically different from American cinema. Foreign films, like American films, exist to entertain, inspire, and communicate—all of which are important to an individual's consciousness."

—Ari Krepostman, producer,
Cineminutes: Ten Takes on New York

"I believe a movie is not [necessarily] from the country where it was shot, but from the people that made it. I believe a film or any other work of art will always have something from the place that the people that made it are from. The language is the first thing that grounds a film to a specific place, but also the humor, the way people talk, the way the characters approach situations, love, fear, death, family. For example, I love the family relationships in Danish movies, or the dark humor and irony in which Mexican films deal with death. Audiences can always relate to universal ideas, but it will always feel different the way they are approached in different cultures. The context, even if it's in the little details gives local flavor to films, like the clothes, the cars, the buildings. But in the end, all good movies deal with universal concepts that anyone anywhere in the world can relate to."

—Bernardo Loyola, writer/director/editor, *The Perfect Day*

"I think that foreign films understand film as art, therefore

the attention to formal aesthetics is greater than that in North American films."

—Marta Sanchez, filmmaker/curator

"The most prevalent distinction [between foreign and American films] that I observe is with the use of cinematic language in dealing with space and time that creates a kind of displacement in the overall experience. As a foreigner feeling in cultural exile, I am at home with this kind of 'otherness.' Whether emerging from inside the United States (culturally foreign) or outside (geographically foreign), aesthetic 'foreignness' can represent a form of resistance to the homogenizing nature of market-driven cinematic culture."

—Louise Bourque, filmmaker,
L'éclat du mal/The Bleeding Heart of It

"To me, ideally foreign film is the embodiment of other voices and vision. And what you see and hear in foreign films is mostly a matter of difference in pace and tone, and a different way of telling—the films not only sound and look different, they feel different."

Aside from the obvious differences in choice of subject matter and perspective that come from a different culture, foreign films seem to differ from American films aesthetically in that they are less presentational. By this, I mean that [the films and filmmakers] feel less obligated to show the audience everything that is happening on screen. They might frame the back of a man's neck rather than his face, allow the actors to fall under shadow, or use sound rather than picture to communicate events. Perhaps this is related to American cinema's theatrical heritage and the idea of the proscenium. Of course, there are always exceptions, and now we have American directors like Gus Van Sant echoing the techniques of the Dardenne brothers."

—Sasie Sealy, director, *Dance Mania Fantastic*

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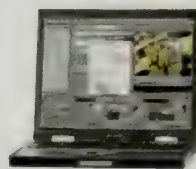
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Rebecca Carroll [Editor-in-Chief]

EDITOR'S LETTER

Dear Readers,

Although by the time this issue is in your hands and on the stands I will be back at work (because we operate on a two-month lead time and I'm writing this in July), I do want to let you know that Shana Liebman, *The Independent's* most exceptional managing editor, stepped in for me to edit the October issue while I was on maternity leave through the summer. In addition to her work with *The Independent*, Shana is also the arts editor at *Heeb* magazine, for which she runs a bimonthly storytelling series at Joe's Pub in New York City, as well as a freelance writer whose work has appeared in *New York* magazine, the *New York Observer*, *Salon*, and the *Village Voice*. I was delighted to leave the magazine in her hands and am confident that we will see a fantastic October issue.

For this issue, we looked at the great (and growing) Goliath of independent film finance and marketing. Frequent contributor Derek Loosvelt talked to producers and filmmakers about what it really takes to make an independent film you can feel proud of, that doesn't feel rushed or compromised—and, of course, where and how to find the money to do that without going into personal debt straight out of the gate. Producer Alexis Alexanian of Elixir Films emphasizes the importance of filmmakers taking their time: "People are jumping in too early...A solid foundation is essential," she says. While producer Maggie Renzi,

who has produced well over a dozen films including most of those made by John Sayles, agrees: "With so many self-funded films, producers and distributors have so much product to choose from that they don't think they have to get in [on the financing] early." (page 36)

Can Bob Berney be stopped? Is he just going to keep churning out one insanely well-marketed independent film after another? What's his secret? Ethan Alter, new to *The Independent*, talked with Berney and some of the folks who have worked with him. From what Alter was able to gather, it doesn't seem that Berney has a secret so much as just a God-given talent for spotting great films and getting them seen, which seems kind of unfair but also slightly awe-inspiring too (page 40).

It may seem like part of the marketing theme to put a good looking actor on the cover, but Ryan Gosling is, at 25, already a veteran actor of independent films—starting with his eerily riveting and pitch perfect performance in *The Believer* (2001), followed by tour-de-force performances in *The Slaughter Rule* (2002) and *The United States of Leland* (2003). Next month he appears in *Stay*, directed by Marc Forster (*Monster's Ball*, 2001), and written by David Benioff (*25th Hour*, 2002). I sat down to talk with Ryan during the 4th of July weekend, in Brooklyn—where he was filming another independent, *Half Nelson*, with directors Ryan Fleck and Anna Boden, whose short film *Gowanus, Brooklyn*, on which *Half Nelson* is based, took home the Grand Jury Prize for short filmmaking at Sundance 2004.

Also in this issue, Linda Chavers reviews a new book about Spike Lee and 40 Acres and a Mule Filmworks, Kate Bernstein profiles the remarkable Cynthia López of P.O.V., and Elizabeth Angell gets the back story on Netflix.

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ETHAN ALTER is a New York-based film critic and journalist whose work has appeared in a variety of publications, including *Entertainment Weekly*, *TV Guide*, and *FHM*. He regularly reviews movies for *Film Journal International* and *Cineman Syndicate*, as well as on his website, www.nycfilmcritic.com.

DAVID ALM teaches film history and writing at two colleges in Chicago. His writing has appeared in *ArtByte*, *Camerawork*, *RES*, *Silicon Alley Reporter*, *SOMA*, and *The Utne Reader*. He's also contributed to books on web design and digital filmmaking, and assisted in making documentaries about architecture and garbage.

ELIZABETH ANGELL is a freelance writer living in New York. She recently received an MFA in creative writing from Columbia and is at work on her first book.

KATE BERNSTEIN is a television producer who has created programming for Bravo, VH1, Metro TV, and Channel 4 UK. She has written about film, music, and popular culture for a variety of magazines. Her short film, *Ladies Room*, was recently released on DVD by Indican Pictures. Kate received her BA from Swarthmore College and her MA from NYU, both in cinema studies. She was born in Moscow, Russia and raised in Brooklyn, New York.

NICHOLAS BOSTON is a frequent contributor to *The Independent*. He is an assistant professor of journalism and mass communications at Lehman College of

Contrib



the City University of New York and appears regularly on various media as a commentator, most recently NBC Channel 4, New York

LINDA CHAVERS graduated from New York University one year ago and is a budding freelance writer and cube monkey



at *The New York Times Magazine*. She has written for *Publishers Weekly*, *Paper magazine* and does regular book reviewing for *NewPages.com*. She is also a volunteer with SAVI Advocates, a sexual assault and domestic violence program in New York City. Check out www.northamerican.negro.blogspot.com.

KATHERINE DYKSTRA, *The Independent's* associate editor, is also a contributor at *The New York Post* and a freelance writer and editor. Her work has appeared in *Time Out New York*, Fodor's travel guides, *Redbook*, and *Ironminds.com*. She is a recent graduate of The New School University's nonfiction MFA program. And she spends Wednesday afternoons teaching creative writing to the coolest kids in Harlem.

GADI HAREL is an award-winning filmmaker and writer living in Los Angeles. In addition to *The Independent*, his writing has appeared in *InStyle* and *The New York Observer*. To learn more about his latest project, check out www.modernconman.com.

utors



KYLE HENRY has directed two feature docs: *American Cowboy*, a 1998 Student Academy Award winner, and 1999's *University, Inc.* about the corporatization of the largest university in America, which played at over 75 colleges, museums, and media arts centers as part of the McCollege Tour—underwritten in part by filmmakers Michael Moore and Richard Linklater. His short *New York Casino* won Best Experimental Short at SXSW in 2003 and toured international museum/arts centers as part of the Black Maria Film & Video Festival, Un-American, and Itinerant Cinema tours. *Room*, his feature debut, had its national premiere at Sundance and international premiere at The Director's Fortnight of Cannes this year. He is also a working editor of such films as *Manito*, *Troop 1500: Girl Scouts Behind Bars*, and *Learning to Swallow*.

DEREK LOOSVELT is a writer and editor living in Brooklyn. He holds a BS in economics from the University of Pennsylvania and an MFA in creative writing from The New School.

RANIA RICHARDSON is a New York-based freelance writer who focuses on independent film. She is the editor of the *AIVF Guide to Film & Video Distributors*. She began her career at *Time* magazine in the production of international editions and has worked in theatrical film distribution for foreign and independent pictures.

FERNANDA ROSSI, known as the Documentary Doctor, is a filmmaker and story consultant who helps filmmakers craft the story structure of their films in all stages of the filmmaking process. She has doctored over 100 documentaries and fiction scripts and is the author of *Trailer Mechanics: A Guide to Making Your Documentary Fundraising Trailer*. For more info: www.documentarydoctor.com.

KATHY Y. WILSON has been Cincinnati's Sapphire-in-residence since the race riots of 2001. Wilson's award-winning, now-defunct column "Your Negro Tour Guide" (now collected in *Your Negro Tour Guide: Truths in Black and White*, 2004, Emmis Books), and her National Public Radio commentaries on "All Things Considered" put the city—and



now the nation—on notice. She is a senior writer and editor for *CityBeat*, Cincinnati's alternative newsweekly. Her poems and columns have been published by *On the One*, *Newsday*, and *Shelterforce*. The Ohio Associated Press, the Association of Alternative Newsweeklies, the Society of Professional Journalists, and the Knight Center for Specialized Journalism at the University of Maryland have all honored her work. Her next book is a mediation on black fathers and daughters called *The Pimp in the Background*.

Correction: The first paragraph of Sasie Sealy's response in "The List" in the July/August issue should have been attributed to Louise Bourque. We apologize for this mistake.



Czech Dream by Vít Klusák, Filip Remunda, Czech Republic. Golden Gate Award, Best Documentary Feature (SFIFF 2005).

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JONATHAN SKURNICK
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Vineyard Haven, Massachusetts
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Jonathan Skurnik's documentary short *The Elevator Operator* (2004) screened at Maryland Film Festival's opening night series of short docs in May, played at New York City's Exit Art in Hell's Kitchen as part of their "Other America" show in March and April, and screened at IFP's Buzz Cuts in March. Skurnik recently wrote and directed his first dramatic short film and was awarded a month-long screenwriting fellowship at the Writers' Colony at Dairy Hollow in Eureka Springs, Arkansas in April and May. Skurnik and Jeff Shames's documentary short, *Spit It Out* (2004), about stutterer Jeff Shames' journey of self acceptance, won awards in 2005 at North America's two most important disabilities film festivals: Picture This in Alberta, Canada, and Superfest in Berkeley, California.

MICHAEL CAPLAN
Montrose Pictures
Chicago, Illinois
Member Since: 1992

Michael Caplan's personal documentary *Stones from the Soil* premiered in over 70 markets on PBS this May. The film explores the impact of Gross Breesen, a Jewish school in 1930s Germany that saved 150 Jewish teenagers from the Holocaust, including Caplan's own father, Rudolph. The younger Caplan is working with a consultant to develop a curriculum to accompany the film. He plans to target it to the educational market, "starting with, but not exclusively, Jewish schools and community organizations and synagogues."

ROSEMARY RODRIGUEZ
Filmmaker
New York, New York
Member Since: 1996

Rosemary Rodriguez wrote, directed, and produced *Acts of Worship*, which premiered at the Sundance Film Festival in

January, 2001, and went on to receive three Independent Spirit Award nominations, including the coveted John Cassavetes Award. About the film, Stephen Holden of *The New York Times* wrote, "...mercilessly gritty...[with] scenes so real they hurt." Hart Sharp Video recently released *Acts of Worship* on DVD, which is currently on the Amazon.com recommended list.



Members in the news

DON BERNIER
Mimetic Media
Brooklyn, New York
Member Since: 1999

Don Bernier's documentary *In a Nutshell: A Portrait of Elizabeth Tashjian* received a NYSCA distribution grant in June. After screening at the Slamdance Film Festival in January, *Nutshell* went on to screen at several other festivals throughout the year including the Independent Film Festival of Boston, the Maryland Film Festival in Baltimore, the San Francisco Documentary Film Festival, and the Los Angeles Film Festival. The film's subject, the Nut Lady, was featured in the "Talk of the Town" section of the April 18, 2005 issue of *The New Yorker*.

BILL LICHTENSTEIN
Lichtenstein Creative Media
Cambridge, Massachusetts
Member Since: 2004

The John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation has named Bill Lichtenstein a 2005 Guggenheim Fellow. Lichtenstein is president of the Peabody Award-winning Lichtenstein Creative Media, a Cambridge-based independent media production company that works in film, TV, and radio. LCM's productions, which include the National Public Radio series, "The Infinite Mind," focus on health, human rights, and other social issues.

ABIGAIL CHILD
Filmmaker
New York, New York
Member Since: 2001

Abigail Child has been accepted as a 2005-2006 fellow at the Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study at Harvard University, where she will work on her film, *The Suburban Trilogy: Part 3 "Surf + Turf."*

And, finally, the following AIVF members/filmmakers are recipients of the 2005 \$50,000 Pew Fellowships, granted to thirteen Philadelphia-based artists.

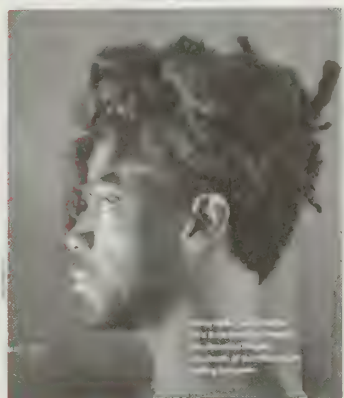
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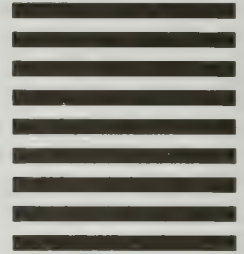
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NEWS

Nollywood Rising

The Nigerian film industry convenes for progress

By Nicholas Boston

Film industries around the world seem fated to endure comparison, if in name only, to Hollywood. India's flamboyant silver-screen capital Bombay (now Mumbai) is credited with being the world's second largest producer of films, hence dubbed "Bollywood." Now in Nigeria, the rapidly expanding digital-video motion picture business, producing over 300 titles a year with huge commercial success across Africa and among Nigerian diasporics in the United States, has acquired its own emulative moniker: "Nollywood."

From June 13 through 17, the first annual convention devoted to the Nigerian commercial film industry "Nollywood Rising," took place at the Hilton Los Angeles in Universal City. The event, organized by Nigerian-born professors in the departments of art history and film studies at the University of California Santa Barbara, brought Nigerian filmmakers into contact with American distributors, investors, and fellow independent filmmakers. Director John Singleton (*Boys in the Hood*, 1991; *Shaft*, 2000) was a special guest. Though roughly half the speakers present were academics fascinated by the phenomenon itself.

"This is a pan-African ideal at this point in time," says organizer Dr. Sylvester Ogbechie, a professor of art history. "Nigeria is the largest black nation in the world and the only film industry in the world controlled by black people, where black people green-light the productions



Convention attendees (l-r) Judy Pace, Akosua Busia, Sylvester Ogbechie, Unidentified, Beverly Todd, and Segun Oyekunle (courtesy of Sylvester Ogbechie)

and have full say in distribution. It is reinvigorating the diaspora and holds enormous potential for black populations internationally."

The roots of Nollywood stretch back to 1992 when Chris Obi-Rapu, an aspiring filmmaker with modest resources, released a home video production called *Living in Bondage*. The film drew unexpected enthusiasm from the general public and triggered a trend in moviemaking on video. A cottage industry took off at the end of the 1990s when films sold in locales as informal as market stalls began to be exported to other countries in Africa. Informal estimates place annual profits at \$300 million.

"Nollywood films have become a dominant media form all over the African continent, certainly in all Anglophone countries—Kenya, Sierra Leone, South Africa—and are beginning to cross over into Francophone Africa despite language barriers," says Dr. Brian Larkin, an anthropologist at Columbia University and guest speaker at the convention. Larkin reported that while hard and fast numbers are difficult to ascertain, attendees at the convention delivered strong anecdotal evidence of the films' proliferation. "The producer Charles Igwe said at the conference that 600,000 Video Compact Disks (VCD) are pressed every day in Lagos and that

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crates and crates leave on planes every day for all over Africa," he says.

The movies' storylines often involve sorcery and include images or references to ritual sacrifices. In 2002, a *New York Times* correspondent reporting from Nollywood's epicenter in the Surulere district of Lagos, noted that one breakthrough film, *I Hate My Village*, dealt with cannibalism; promotional material for the film shows the lead actor chewing on what was supposed to be human flesh. Debate arose at the conference over the admissibility of these types of images. Most of the Nigerian filmmakers and producers brushed off criticism that such images might be offensive, saying audiences in Nigeria are genuinely interested in these themes. "We possess the Nigerian audience. There is no question about that," Igwe reportedly stated.

In an interview, Mahen Bonetti, executive director of the African Film Festival and a convention speaker, noted the extensive diversity of themes across the Nollywood repertoire. She said that depending on the area of Nigeria in which a film is made, storylines can range from "song and dance, all love, love, love," to "allegoric and stagy," to "the melodramatic telenovela...there are many, many sub-genres."

And what of Nollywood's crossover appeal in the American market? "Africans should not be chasing Hollywood," says Bonetti. "Hollywood is going to come to us." Bonetti and others point to the main element that sets Nollywood apart from other movie-making industries: technology.

"Iranian cinema, Indian cinema, they all make their first cuts in celluloid," she says. "The Nigerians are making straight-to-video productions. That makes a big difference." There are an estimated 57 million households with video players in Nigeria, compared to a negligible number of movie theatres. "Home viewing in Nigeria and many other African countries is almost on par with cinema attendance," confirmed Ogbechie, noting that pre-Nollywood African cinema tended to be "auteur film-making" that was expensive to produce, and ended up screening almost exclusively at film-festivals outside of Africa.

All attendees to the convention agreed that the downside to the accessibility and speedy production-to-release cycle of

Nollywood films is their low production value. Sound quality is notoriously poor. The convention addressed this issue by concluding with a series of technology workshops and plans to revisit the concern during future conventions. "Next year, we will focus more on the practice," Ogbechie said. "Instead of the theory of the practice."

I Want My SFTV

Film schools are always trying to find ways to not only technically and creatively prepare students for jobs in the industry, but to help them get those jobs, as well. What's the use of providing a sound education in movie-making if, after graduation, your students are interviewing at Target?

Loyola Marymount University School of Film and Television (SFTV), which is quickly becoming a popular film school, has launched a new office of external affairs, headed by two accomplished industry insiders: Peter Heller as director, and Kathleen McNinnis—in a seat created just for her—as film festival specialist.

But considering that many graduate film schools suffer a high-intentions-low-results method of career placement, the question arises: What exactly does this new office aim to accomplish?

SFTV's choice of Heller and McNinnis is a good start. Heller, a veteran independent producer and manager, comes to SFTV after operating his own firm, Heller Highwater Productions. His producing credits include *Like Mike* (2002) for 20th Century Fox, starring Bow Wow and Morris Chestnut, and *Brown Sugar* (2002) for Fox Searchlight, starring Taye Diggs, Sanaa Lathan, Queen Latifah, and Mos Def. Heller's management client list includes writers Danny Rubin (*Ground Hog Day*, 1993), Christian McLaughlin ("Clueless" TV series, 1996), and Brandon Sonnier, (*The Beat*, 2003)—the youngest director to premiere a film at the Sundance Film Festival. What he brings to the table, he says, is meat for the masses: "I know that the industry is always hungry for new voices."

Kathleen McNinnis is the former director of the Slamdance Film Festival—intentionally smaller and more populous than Sundance—which in its 11 years has increasingly attracted major producers and

distributors looking for fresh talent. True to the mission of external affairs, McInnis will divide her time between "festival specializing" at SFTV and serving on jury panels for festivals at Galway, Seattle, and Toronto.

"This office is absolutely unique, it doesn't exist anywhere else in academia," McInnis says. "In this truly competitive industry, an extra advantage...can mean the difference between a career making films or just a career."

City Lights

City Lights Media Group, the 22-year-old film production company founded and run by brothers Danny, Jack, and Joe Fisher, is entering the numbers game. The company recently announced the launch of a private equity unit, City Lights Pictures Film Fund, to acquire, develop, and finance motion pictures.

"We see a fantastic opportunity in the marketplace right now," says Danny Fisher, CEO of the New York City-based outfit. "There are very few industry sources to go to for financing. Our own financing gives us the leverage to participate in the very best projects, and there are many independent films out there that are deserving of financing."

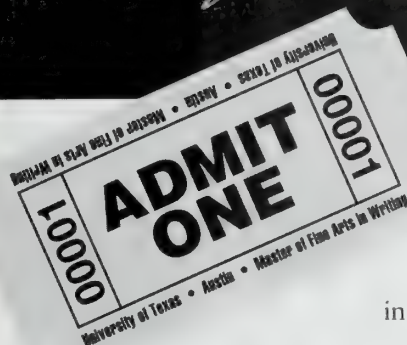
The fund will have three financing divisions: City Lights Pictures for budgets from \$3-\$12 million, City Lights 3000 for films with a \$1 million ceiling, and City Lights Uptown (with Wu-Tang Clan co-founder Oliver "Power" Grant as executive producer and former Martin Luther King, Jr. speechwriter Clarence B. Jones as advisor) for projects aimed at the urban market.

Despite the new funding unit, the company will continue producing films—including the supernatural thriller *Tamara*, from *Final Destination* (2000) creator Jeffrey Reddick, to be released by Lions Gate later this year and the upcoming Nicholas Ray biopic, *Interrupted*.

"We are ramping up all of our activities in our other divisions, and have recently opened a sound record/mix facility as well as an L.A. office for our TV company," Fisher says. "We believe in an integrated company with various components all working together and supporting each other. We feel that makes our company unique in the industry." ★

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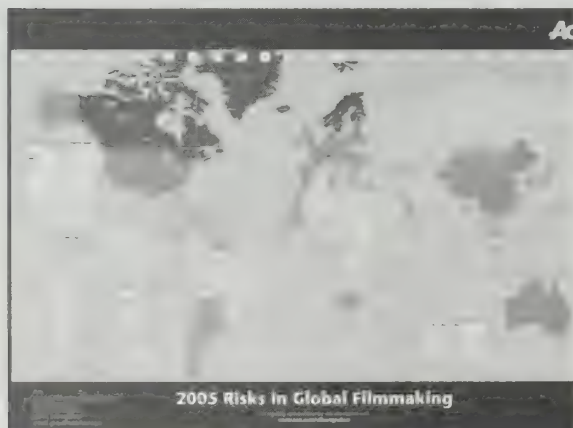
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Tools You Can Use

By David Alm

Risky Business

One of the most useful new tools comes from, of all places, a risk management and insurance firm. Last spring, the Chicago-based Aon corporation introduced an extensively updated version of its Global Filmmaker's Map created for filmmakers whose projects take them into the darkest corners of our increasingly dangerous planet. The map identifies 91 countries as "high risk" and details their respective



Global Filmmaker's Map

threats. Though terrorist activity is a major category in this year's map, disease, crime, political unrest, and absence of medical care are also duly noted. Visit www.aon.com for more information, and be safe!

Take Back the Stock

Who says grassroots campaigns have to be political? For anyone who's not



Avalon Family Boom Poles

quite ready to trade all their old metal reels in for a box of DV tapes, an effort on your behalf is afoot. This summer the Rural Route Film Festival, a New York-based organization that showcases work addressing rural life, launched an online petition pleading Kodak to continue producing its Kodachrome Super 8 film stock, whose popularity has rapidly diminished with the digital revolution. Fortunately, this isn't politics: surely celluloid and code can co-exist in a non-partisan mediascape. To sign the petition, visit www.petitiononline.com/k40/petition.html.

Raise High the Boom Pole, Filmmakers

The excuses for not shooting a costume drama atop Mount Everest are growing fewer by the minute. Compared to their film counterparts, DV cameras are feather-light. Unfortunately, the same can't be said for most of the other hardware that accompanies a major shoot. But that's chang-

ing too. This year, California-based filmmaking accessories firm K-Tek lightened the load with its new line of Avalon Aluminum Boom Poles, which range from 5'9"—when fully extended—and 12.5 ounces to 9'2" and 23.5 ounces. The poles can be collapsed to a quarter their extended length for easy storage and transport. And they're light on the wallet, too: the poles range from just \$160 to \$255. For more information, visit www.mklemme.com.

Don't Wait for Miramax

Everyone knows that making the movie's the easy part. Finding distribution is where things get tricky. But as the indie rock mavens of the early 1990s proved, you don't need a big corporation to build a market, or even to deliver the goods. That said, while indie recorders could just throw an old cassette into a boom box, hit "record," dub infinite copies, and ship off the tapes—producing and distributing DVDs is a bit more complicated. Which is where Disc Makers, a New Jersey-based CD and DVD replication and packaging firm, comes in. Disc Makers will produce as few as 300 copies of your project, complete with full-color covers, three-color on-disc printing, DVD cases, and poly wrap packaging—all for under \$1,000. And for an extra \$99, the company will even print 300 customized, full-color promotional posters. Getting your film seen might be up to you, but at least it'll be all dressed up and ready to go. For more info: www.discmakers.com. ★

Making Room

The highs and lows of directing a cheap thriller

By Kyle Henry

I'm the director of the low-budget psychological thriller *Room* (2005), which premiered at Sundance and had its international debut in the Directors Fortnight at Cannes in May. *Room* was produced by The 7th Floor along with Jim McKay and Michael Stipe's C-Hundred Film Corp. Our four-week, twenty-four-day production was equally divided between two weeks in Texas and two weeks in New York City. The film centers on the mid-life crisis of a bingo hall employee and mother of two in her late 40s who leaves her family to follow migraine-induced, debilitating visions. Lessons learned:

1. Lie to yourself constantly that everything will be OK. Rodney Evans (*Brother to Brother*, 2004) gave me the best advice before going into production: pray. Once pre-production and financing is more or less in place, what's the use of staying up late worrying the night before the first day of shooting? Pray to your God—or the Gods of Cinema—that all will be well and admit that it's mostly out of your control once the ball starts rolling. It will rain, snow, and sleet. Actors will cancel the day (the night!) before their scenes are to be shot. You cannot freak out. You must remain calm. You are acting the part of director as much as your actors are acting the part of characters, and they are depending upon you to play your part well. So, just pray, meditate, enjoy each act of the circus that is filmmaking.

2. Cast your crew well. Cast crew like you would cast actors—interview them intensely, especially keys. Are they socially compatible? Are they creative and bright people with interests that mesh with your own, or can they add a level of contradiction that will keep you honest? Are their references from trusted sources? It's cliché but true that you are building a small army to go into battle, so having a combined sense of mission (and a good sense of humor) will carry you all through the long hours that lie ahead. During the rush of production, when my energy level was well past spent, I can't even begin to count out how many cre-



Assistant director Sarah Minter monitors an improvised grocery cart dolly loaded with director Kyle Henry and DP P.J. Raval during the shoot of *Room* (courtesy of David Cox)

ative solutions were offered by crew members. One example: Our New York City AD, Bruce Hall, took detailed notes during our brief location scout in New York. As I hurried through a million tasks during pre-production, from rehearsing with actors to writing checks, these notes became a first draft that DP PJ Raval and I would recast into our final shot list. Everyone's contributions were encouraged and trusted, creating a group endeavor greater than any single director's vision. Heck, this is what you are hiring people for—their brains and their creative energy!



Room's lead actress Cyndi Williams prepares for an emotional breakdown in Times Square
(courtesy of Siobhan Walshe)

aging of an impression will be captured. We shot on Panasonic DVX100 miniDV cameras with no lights other than practicals and creative curtain hanging. I had a lot to learn and knew that, along with the actors, we'd need the time video could afford to discover these moments. There is nothing worse than watching a pretty indie film with flat performances. Thank God DP PJ Raval is also a master camera operator and a beautiful on-the-fly sculptor of light. Again, a well-cast crew should be trusted and allowed the space to add their own creativity to the project so that you, the director, can concentrate on building moments of life with the actors.

3. Strive for simplicity. Having worked as an editor for several years, I knew it was my job to collect as much useful material (good performances, multiple angles, etc) as possible for my own editor. Without this, all the script pages would remain a fantasy. I also wanted to make

sure to push actors past their comfort range toward moments of discovery. Discoveries should be made in the moment between the living human beings right there on set, and not in your or the actor's preconception of the characters. Otherwise a stale, lifeless repack-

4. No one will understand it (not even you) until it is done! Unless you're basing your work on formula, no one, not even you, will know if it will work before it is done. When pitching your project (for grants, to producers, to investors) you have to constantly convey the sense that yes, of course, this film will work. Divided as it is into two separate

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- Johannes Roberts, Director, Gatlin Pictures

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halves, with the central character abandoning her family and known world in the first half then transitioning to episodic encounters with surreal and dream-like apparitions in the second half, it is not a stretch to say that *Room* challenges narrative assumptions ingrained in most of the heads of American cinema viewers. I, romantically, believe artists should help liberate their audience from these assumptions. Whose life resembles the three act, neat-and-clean structure of a Hollywood thriller? Why do films involving a female character's psychological journey always lead to her death or to a sappy (and unbelievable in a two hour movie format) liberation and transformation? Where is the third, middle path to be found? Define your terms for what works.

Room's producer Jesse Scolaro and editor Pete Beaudreau helped out with innumerable solutions to inherent narrative problems during post including scenes we could lose, performances to massage, the construction of a complex soundscape to compliment visions. But in the end, certain major decisions came down to intent. Until the last moments before picture lock, none of us knew for sure if the pieces would gel into a coherent and moving work of cinema. Figuring that out is the director's final responsibility.

5. Take responsibility for what you've done...then jump off the cliff. I remember being counseled one evening after a screening by colleagues with the best of intentions to change *Room's* ending to something more concrete. It was one of those moments when we really have to decide what the hell we are doing. I thought that by deciding to keep the ending that I liked—the one I was sure would provoke audiences—I was closing the door on any sort of career as a filmmaker. I know that sounds melodramatic,

but let's face it, the American media are not exactly champions of provocative political cinema right now (documentaries excluded). Most of my heroes, though, are people who "speak truth to power," whether to political leaders or to a delusional marketplace. This isn't a career-making trait, but it is an essential part of my sense of self as an artist and a person, so I decided to stay true to myself and blow my career.

After making that decision, a huge weight lifted, and I stopped caring. I stopped caring about the credit card debt, the pressures of the marketplace, about audience expectations and just decided to trust my love for this little beast of a film. And I knew it would work ... for me. If an audience booed, I would score my own secret victory through con-



Cyndi Williams encounters the unknown in *Room* (Siobhan Walshe)

frontation. After all, I too have cursed films I now cherish because on first viewing I didn't "get it."

Not only have audiences responded warmly to our experiment at Sundance and Cannes, but the biggest shock of all is that *Room* has sold to one of the most respected international sales agents in the world, Celluloid Dreams. Sometimes, the zeitgeist rewards the gamblers. As a filmmaker, how far will you push the boundaries of convention and how much will you change the preconceptions held both by yourself and your audiences? My advice? Really, really, screw your career if you have the chance, because more important things hang in the balance. ★

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Go-Kart Films founder Will Keenan (Stefanie Keenan)

From Cecil B. to Businessman

Will Keenan & Go-Kart Films

By Gadi Harel

Will Keenan has done some crazy things to promote movies. He's been hit by a car, threatened self-immolation, and climbed a water tower only to get busted on the 6 o'clock news. Keenan even once dove from a third-floor balcony into a pool. But what he's doing these days to promote movies is, by his standards, far scarier than any rapidly approaching front bumper or a 50-foot free fall. These days, it's all about spreadsheets, managing interns, and getting to the office by 9 am.

Will Keenan has become a businessman.

Anyone who knew Keenan before he moved to Los Angeles from New York two years ago knew someone who was many things—but a businessman was not one of them. He was an actor, a director, a stunt (and sex) choreographer,

and a casting agent. In an underground soundstage he once created in a Brooklyn warehouse, where he scurried between taped-together editing consoles and a row of film sets built from discarded sitcom flats and dumpster-dives, he was nothing less than Cecil B. Demented incarnate. So, sure, from a distance this recent change may cause an aspiring filmmaker to shed a tear for another lost soldier in the battle for independent cinema. But this is good news. Really. Will Keenan may now be a businessman, but he's a businessman who wants to work for you.

"When it comes to distribution, I've been burned," says Keenan. "Everyone I know who's made movies has been burned ... by distributors, by labels, you name it. So we created this company to be the alternative."

That "we" includes Greg Ross, who started the successful New York City punk music label Go-Kart Records over 13 years ago. And "this company" is Go-Kart Films, a joint DVD distribution venture.

The two met while working on Trauma Film's 1999 cult hit *Terror Firmer*, which Keenan not only starred in but also served as associate producer. "I hired Greg to do the soundtrack and [the film] did so poorly that he said I owed him," recalls Keenan. Payback was producing what would be Ross's directorial debut, the documentary *Into the Night: The Benny Mardones Story* (2002), which chronicled the troubled fame of a one-hit wonder. "It did well," notes Keenan. "It played some festivals and Wellspring picked it up for TV rights. But when it

was time to sell it to a distributor, I pretty much had to break the bad news to Greg and tell him, 'If you get anything up front it's going to be very little and chances are, from that point on, you'll never see a dime.' Unfortunately, that's a common experience when it comes to independent distribution."

Keenan knew what he was talking about. This was 2002, about the time *Operation Midnight Climax* (a comedic conspiracy-themed feature he and this writer collaborated on) had arrived at a similar point—successful festival run, a few awards, great press, and distributor interest. It wasn't difficult for Keenan to describe to Ross what he calls "filmmaker desperation": a condition whereby you realize you're about to sign away the rights to your film for little more than the thrill of seeing it in a video store coupled with the feeling that you have no other choice and followed by repeated attempts to convince yourself that this crummy situation is perfectly okay. Rather than suffer this fate, the two decided to take matters into their own hands.

Shortly after Keenan arrived in California, Ross's wife took a job in LA, and in the spring of 2003, the men found themselves in the same town again. A new city suggested a new opportunity and though "let's just put these movies out ourselves" may have sounded like a naïve Hail Mary play, Ross had a successful music catalog to use as leverage. Shortly after settling in California, Ross left his music distributor for Koch Entertainment, a large distributor that handles both music and movies.

They made an announcement, and it wasn't long before Keenan heard from two New York acquaintances. The directors Michael Galinsky and Suki Hawley were having last-second problems completing a distribution deal on *Horns and Halos* (2002), their controversial and critically acclaimed documentary about George W. Bush's early years. With the election approaching, they knew the film needed to be released quickly. They also knew it had to be handled correctly, and they weren't convinced by their current distributor. For the first time, Keenan found himself on the other side of the desk. "When filmmakers talk to distribu-

tors about a deal, they're used to hearing about this weird percentage thing that they can never really figure out," notes Keenan. "The one time with *Operation Midnight Climax* when I actually was able to figure it out, I realized that we would have gotten 65 cents or 85 cents per unit sold. I thought, 'Wait a minute, you're charging \$19.98! This is a scam!'"

As he begins describing Go-Kart Film's strategy, Keenan leans in and his voice lowers, as if he's about to break an industry omerta. "At the end of the day, let's say distributors get about six dollars to play with per unit. They're gonna want to make five of that six. So they try to get the filmmaker to take a lot less by spouting vague percentages," Keenan says. "And even if you're able to get a decent royalty rate, you realize that the costs they'll need to recoup are just insane. You end up paying for their paper clips."

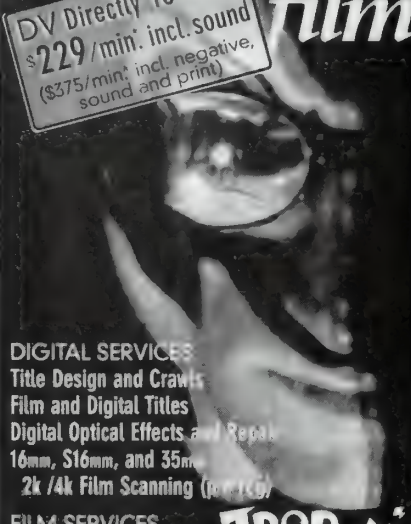
Keenan pauses and takes a deep breath. He's in full-businessman mode. "That's why I call us the alternative," he says. "Our deals are very different. If we have six bucks to play with at the end of the day, we split it right down the middle with our filmmakers. If we're making \$3 per unit, so are they."

Keenan made the Go-Kart pitch to Galinsky and Hawley, which resulted in *Horns and Halos* becoming the fledgling company's first (and still most successful to date) release. "We really appreciate that Go-Kart stepped in and helped us get the film out," Galinsky says. "They had a good reach and really got the film into stores."

In the eight months since then, another forty have followed and Go-Kart Films is now averaging three to five releases a month. These acquisitions have come through various channels; Keenan continues to mine his past decade of cinema experience—meaning he scours through the thousands of business cards he collected through projects, at festivals, and on cross-country travels. He also uses "independent contractors" (read: trusted film types who are traveling to festivals), who keep a discerning eye out. "If someone brings a film to us, they get a signing fee," says Keenan. "And if, in certain cases, they're very close to the film, maybe they even worked on it, it may

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Soon after *Operation Midnight Climax*, Keenan (above in a scene from the film which he co-wrote in 2002) realized the frequent scams involved in distribution (courtesy of Will Keenan)

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maybe they even worked on it, it may make sense to cut them in on the royalty rate—whether it's 10 cents a unit or 25 cents a unit."

And with Keenan, deals can even go down simply because he happened to be at the right 7-Eleven parking lot at the right time. Take the night he and his friend were asked by a man living in a van parked next to them for a cigarette (they obliged). As a thank you, the smoker gave them a sticker for a new documentary coming out of Iraq. The film was a compilation of material shot by Iraqis since the commencement of the US occupation. The man was Aaron Raskin, the film's producer; *The Dream of Sparrows* (2005) soon became one of Go Kart's leading titles.

Of course, if Go Kart is enjoying that kind of output, it follows that other companies must be doing the same. "Over 250 DVDs are released every Tuesday. We all fight for shelf space," says Keenan. "It's incredibly tough." But Go Kart has

an ace up its sleeve: Koch Entertainment. "Koch pitches the retail chains, and they're very good at it," says Keenan. "They've been doing it for twenty years and have 9000 accounts in North America"—including Blockbuster, Best Buy, Wal-Mart, Tower Records, and Hollywood Video—"and then as a label, we reach out to the independent stores, the little mom-and-pop shops."

Keenan may talk a great business game, but he hasn't put aside the things that brought him to Hollywood. "I still act now and then, and there are a bunch of scripts I'm attached to as either a producer or talent," says Keenan, who lives in Hollywood with his wife Stefanie, a photographer. But at this moment in time, everything else is secondary to Go Kart. Yes, his agent thinks he's crazy; so does his manager. And no, this isn't a cheap ploy to meet directors, he promises with a laugh.

But it's a rare laugh when he's discussing business. When Keenan speaks

“And even if you’re able to get a decent royalty rate, you realize that the costs they’ll need to recoup are just insane. You end up paying for their paper clips.”

—Will Keenan

it’s with the true understanding that a movie isn’t a can of soup: it can’t just be shoved between other cans on a supermarket shelf. Rather, an independent film is nothing less than someone’s dream. And any filmmaker will tell you that a movie is, among other things, a very personal diary of a set period of time, usually years. It involves relationships, beginnings, endings, and a million other wonderful and painful moments that aren’t pictured on the screen. How do you nickel-and-dime a filmmaker over something like that?

As we sit next to a statue of Buddha on the grounds of Hollywood’s Self-Realization Center, which Keenan calls home, it’s obvious that he has no intention

of messing with filmmaker karma.

When Keenan tells me, “This is my job, and it will be for a while,” his path appears rather clear, and there’s even an echo of the old saying that you can’t know where you’re going if you don’t know where you’ve been. Will Keenan certainly knows where he’s been. If you’re talking to him about your film, chances are that he once kicked the dirt exactly where you’re standing right now.

“With Go Kart Films, I’m taking everything I learned about publicity and grassroots and guerilla marketing, and I’m using it for everyone else. It’s the fun part of the business that I enjoyed the most when I was making films—travel-

ing around, trying to raise awareness. The goal used to be getting people into theaters. Now, it’s trying to get them into stores,” says Keenan.

This doesn’t mean he’s not still looking for the next great publicity stunt. It’s just that these days, he may be more likely to get a paper cut than wrestle a crocodile to promote a project. Nevertheless, he’s more devoted than ever to the filmmaker’s plight. And maybe, just maybe, Keenan’s new approach is not just safer, but smarter. ★

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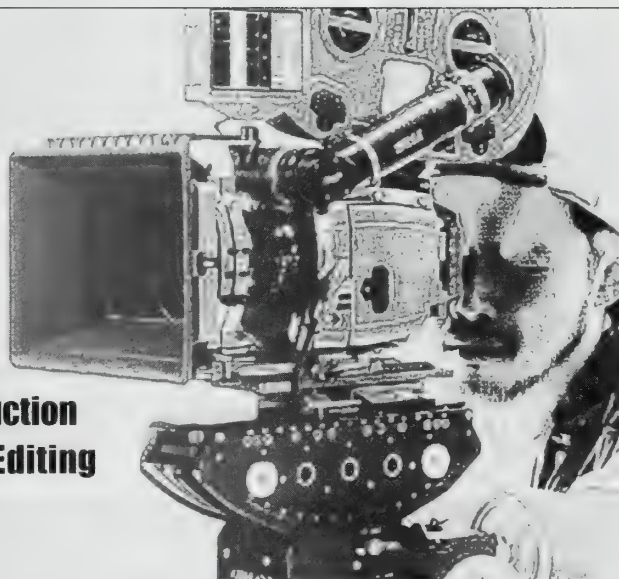
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ASK

the Documentary Doctor

By Fernanda Rossi

Dear Doc Doctor:

How can I calculate how much archival footage I'll need for my film, and how much it will cost?

Predicting how much archival footage you will use is like looking at those optical illusion drawings—you have to squint your eyes for it to make sense. But first, get a pen and paper, and then sign up for an unlimited calling plan and a fast Internet connection.

Squint your eyes and imagine your film. Is it a historical documentary with narration and interviews only? Will archival footage be adequate coverage or is other b-roll available? Will there be action/verité footage as counterpoint? Are re-enactments, animation and metaphorical/poetic footage appropriate for the project and to your liking? For now, don't make choices based on cost—just list your elements.

Now draw a pie chart. Divide it up proportionally with those elements you listed. If your pie reflects that your film is all narration and interviews, maybe you need 70 to 80 percent of b-roll—whether archival or not. In general, voiceover needs to be covered 100 percent and interviews need at least 50 percent coverage, unless you are making a film Errol Morris-style. Rent a documentary similar to yours and draw its pie chart for comparison. It might not be a completely accurate method, but it's better than throwing a die.



Once you know how many minutes you'll need, it's time to make phone calls or go online to locate collections with your film's subject. Start with the national archives both in the US and UK (www.archives.gov and www.nationalarchives.gov.uk), and ask your prospective interview subjects for further leads, commercial or otherwise.

Licensing fees vary from a few hundred to several thousand dollars per minute, though some footage is exempt due to "fair use." Check the groundbreaking research and educational work of Pat Aufderheide and Peter Jaszi for insights on your case at American University's Center for Social Media (www.centerforsocialmedia.org).

However, even if the footage is public domain or royalty-free you still have to calculate associated cost—such as film transfer and tape dubs for both preview and master copies (fortunately, preview samples are sometimes streamlined on web-

sites), and research and clearance negotiation time, which can take several months. Don't forget viewing time, especially if done with your editor, and shipping.

Boston-based writer/director María Agui Carter, who has produced several historical documentaries for PBS, says, *The Devil's Music*, about fear of blackness and sexuality in American jazz censorship, was about 70 percent archival. "We hired a footage researcher who kept cost down by finding public domain archival newsreels, but our feature clips averaged \$5,000 per minute." Her choices paid off, jazz archivist Michael Chertok considers the film "the best use of historic footage in a film I have ever seen."

Dear Doc Doctor:

There are so many classes offered for mid-career filmmakers. How do I choose and how much should I be willing to spend?

What was the point of that student loan for film school if a decade later you're still taking classes, right? But as technology changes, markets shift and you mature as a filmmaker, which can mean that some updating might be necessary every now and then.

If the paranoia of not having gone to film school makes you sign up for everything and anything, a metropolitan city can provide too many options. Filmmaker Jesse Epstein, moderator of the New York daily listserv *ShootingPeople.org*, says, "We get 150 posts weekly, 30 of which are for professional training."

Before you succumb to the overload of skilled marketing people whose ads pray on your fears and promise success, make sure you know what you don't know. List your weak areas specifically. Then ask, "Do I really need to learn that right now, or am I better off hiring someone?" Maybe a two-hour class to get a general understanding of that particular aspect of film will suffice.

For mid-career filmmakers, I have found that educational opportunities can be divided into three groups. First

group: the insiders. These are people from foundations and organizations that serve on panels and teach workshops around the country about their individual foundations. Don't skip these opportunities—they are a unique chance to learn about various organizations.

The second group: the filmmakers. These are people who have just succeeded with their work through amazing outreach efforts, an incredible festival run, or an unprecedented budget juggle. And they are going to tell you how they did it fresh from the frontlines. Pay attention, though, their methods are just what have worked for them, which may not necessarily work for you. Fees vary, but no price is too high if your project and plan of action coincide with experiences these filmmakers may have had. It will save you a lot of time and money to learn from those who are a few steps ahead of the game.

Third group: the teachers. These are people highly specialized in one particular area of film, though they may or may not have a successful film career. Don't let that discourage you—you want their knowledge, not their life. And contrary to the popular "those who can't do, teach" cliché, these are people generous enough to share years of research and who possess the skills to pass that knowledge on in an effective way. Do beware, however, of ads that use superlatives—there is no "best" or "number one" in teaching and learning. Knowledge can't be harnessed. A good teacher will be humble and aware of how much they still need to learn. Prices might shock you. Double check credentials and extra points if the class is sponsored by a film organization—they have already checked credentials for you!

All in all, keep a positive attitude and an eye on your wallet. Even if the experience doesn't rock your world, there will always be something good to take with you—if nothing else, a contact number from the person sitting next to you. Who knows where that will lead? ★



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For Colored Girls Who Considered Their Own Film Festival When Sundance Is Enuf

The Black-Eyed Susans Film Festival

By Kathy Y. Wilson, co-founder & co-organizer



L-R: photos 1, 3 & 4 are from *Prometheas' Visual Inversion: A Life Less Ordinary*—a film by Una-Kariim Cross; photo 2 is filmmaker Selena Burks (photo by Una-Kariim Cross); photo 5 is festival participant Una-Kariim Cross (photos courtesy of Kathy Y. Wilson)

Documentation is validation. Within any community populated by black women, we're more apt to bear the psychic pain of walking-around sadness—left unnamed, that sadness morphs into powerlessness and, ultimately, silence. Alas, filmmaking is the new Amen Corner, and the all-women's colored choir is armed with cameras. A good thing too, because even in contemporary cinema with all its advances, other people still speak for black women, writing and casting roles dipped in the sepia stereotypes of postmodern mummies, rife with shallow subject matter like beauty shop bitchiness and baby mamma drama.

Far from the maddening crowd of name brand festivals and the entrée they bring, a tight-knit community of black women filmmakers thrives in Cincinnati, Ohio. They screen films for the mere satisfaction of audience reaction and social justice. And to that end, the first ever Black-Eyed Susans Film Festival premiered in

Cincinnati last June with disparate strokes of cinematic revolution.

Comprising just three documentaries—*Saving Jackie* by Selena Burks, *Prometheas' Visual Inversion: A Life Less Ordinary* by Una-Kariim Cross, and *The Color of Justice: A History of Cincinnati's Race Riots from 1792 to 2001* by April L. Martin—the little film festival that could screened two packed houses of folks hungry for flicks a little deeper than *The Longest Yard* and *Monster-in-Law*.

At both screenings, the audiences included white intellectuals, sophisticated Huxtable-esque couples, revolutionary nappy-headed black women, college activists, and young black b-boys. "In a city like Cincinnati, communities are built," says Black-Eyed Susans co-organizer Dani McClain. "Everybody knows who the nappy heads are, everybody knows who the social justice set is, but what you can do is pull together those different communities and give them

something to think and talk about."

"It's not so much about building community," McClain continues. "Who knows if that same configuration of people will ever get together in that same room, ever?" Though it might seem the result of intense media promotion in the weeks before the festival, the mixed audiences were in fact intentionally lured to The Greenwich, a small jazz club-cum-screening room in Walnut Hills, a working-class black enclave of Cincinnati.

Forced socialization across race, class, and gender was one goal McClain and I intended for this festival. "I thought: It'd be cool to have a festival that celebrates our lives, something to put black lives on the screen," says McClain, a 27-year-old former history teacher and recent Columbia University School of Journalism graduate student. "We've never used film as something to bring together our community," she says. And we pulled it off with three wildly

different films by equally different black women.

Saving Jackie is Selena Burks' 35-minute saga about her mother, Jackie. Fresh from rehab to kick a crack cocaine habit and just days into her new gas station job, Jackie's sobriety is so new to her that she sees her world like a child who's just learned to speak. Set against the backdrop of high school and college graduations and other life-goes-on mundaneness, Burks' interviews with her younger sister, her sometimes estranged father, and the



foster mother who gave her refuge lend Jackie's story an extra dollop of bittersweet as they demonstrate how the entire family endures the ravages of Jackie's addiction. No black mamma hallmark, *Saving Jackie* is a postmodern valentine written in the hope of reconciliation.

Prometheas' Visual Inversion: A Life Less Ordinary is a deftly edited 25-minute meditation on "the commonalities as well as the differences amongst people who occupy the social atmosphere of life," says filmmaker Una-Kariim Cross. "This is not a video about race." Originally part of Cross's 2004 master's thesis in photography at the University of Cincinnati's College of Design, Art, Architecture and Planning, the piece is still relevant because it is a stitched-together chorus of how life would sound if we all told the truth about entitlement and, conversely, disenfranchisement.

Deliciously, some of Cross's subjects do not always tell whole truths, like the well-meaning white man who takes several stuttering passes at saying "nigger" as he tries to talk about the racism of other white men;

or the mature, wealthy white socialite who says African Americans have told her she "walks the walk"; or the African man who seems depressed by his new African American identity.

The festival closed with *The Color of Justice*, April L. Martin's two-hour-plus epic covering the history of Cincinnati's race riots from the eighteenth century through 2001, a fitting bookmark to leave with Cincinnati audiences considering how far we still have to go in racial understanding.



Of her involvement with the festival, Burks, a 25-year-old Cincinnati transplant from Cleveland and Dayton, says, "Cincinnati is such a...there's a lot of tension here. [There are] a lot of racial, economic and class issues here and to be part of a collective of solid black female voices, I feel like I'm part of a movement."

Small-scale artistic revolution seems the only salve for this city still divided greatly along lines of class and race. Inundated by pockets of poverty, ridden with violent crime perpetuated by mostly young black males against themselves, and overrun by brazen corporate panhandling, we're still slouching through the rubble left by the April 2001 riots that followed the fatal police shooting of 19-year-old Timothy Thomas. However, art springs forth here, and it is easy to harvest.

As co-organizer and promoter, the Black-Eyed Susans Film Festival was for me first and foremost an excuse to corral the talent surrounding me and direct it toward a substantive and progressive event. I wanted folks who'd been frustrated by their

own confusion, rage, questions, and identity to sit together in a dark room and laugh, moan, sigh and cry together: Humanity at the movies.

All friends, I already knew each of the filmmakers from different corners of my life. Cross pays her bills as an arts administrator, but she's known in the street as a photographer who captures off-kilter portraits of everyday grace; Martin is a freelance journalist and a self-taught documentarian whose reputation for stalking down the truth belies her youthful inexperience;



and Burks has the most film and festival experience—*Saving Jackie* screened at Sundance, and the Cleveland International and Urban World film festivals.

But before we could name our "event," we had to organize ourselves. And so, the Hallelujah Time Grown-Ass Black Women's Artistic Collective was born.

"It's one thing to just have a group of friends with whom you share a similar interest, but it's another thing to have a project you're all focused on bringing to fruition," says McClain. While Burks says, "The energy [in Cincinnati] is very apathetic. The energy within our collective is the antithesis of that."

Propelling this collaboration forward required power that we already had but that we'd never before collectively utilized. Strangely, we have examples of black female power in Cincinnati, but so often that power comes only in quotation marks. Both the city manager and vice mayor are black women, yet they exist as mere figureheads with little say-so regarding marked change.

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"We harnessed power together," says McClain. "The black power elite doesn't stand for anything. For us to do something like this is just in keeping with what we've all been building on for awhile."

Lest this all dissolve into one ass-kissing session of self-congratulation, we withstood our share of Black-Eyed calamities. There were nearly 30 minutes of post-intermission technical hell during the final night's screening of *The Color of Justice*. Further, days before the festival, Martin's hard drive crashed and she lost the timeline of her entire documentary, which luckily, was subsequently rescued by a technician. Then, the film wouldn't print to VHS or DVD. The entire festival was conceived, promoted, and presented in lockstep with my mother's diagnosis of and death from pancreatic cancer. When she died May 10 with less than one month before the festival, we hadn't done any press, printed any fliers or posters, or even written the press release.

I thought: What would my mamma do? She'd have finished. And we did.

Securing the 98-seat venue guaranteed that a small crowd would fill the room fast, and it did...both nights. With no overhead, a sponsor-donated ad, and the venue's co-owner footing the cost to print posters, we cleared enough money to pay the filmmakers, the ad designer, the sound technician, and half back to the co-owner for the posters.

Next year we intend to return wiser, a little bigger, and with a farther reach. Ultimately, the Black-Eyed Susans Film Festival is an outlet for women filmmakers of color. We started with who we had—three black women in Cincinnati—and we'll continue and expand according to who will have us.

Encouragingly, McClain envisions the festival as a bridge-builder between Cincinnati and New York, her second hometown. "They're both too insular and they both suffer because of that," she says. "New York needs a dose of midwestern reality, and Cincinnati needs a dose of New York possibility." ★

For more information on *The Black-Eyed Susans Film Festival*, please email blk_eyedsusans@yahoo.com.

By Rania Richardson

“It’s the brain of the free world,” said Austrian filmmaker Hubert Sauper, referring to our nation’s capital, the hub for political movers and shakers and the global impact they command. Sauper’s film, *Darwin’s Nightmare*, about the terrifying consequences of globalization, won top prize at the Silverdocs: AFI/Discovery

Channel Documentary Festival, which was held in June in Silver Spring, Maryland, an urban suburb of Washington, DC.

Set in Tanzania, Sauper’s atmospheric film examines the ill effects that transpire after a Nile perch is artificially introduced to Lake Victoria and wipes out all the native fish species, triggering a domino effect that leads to a starving community plagued with AIDS. Through rich characters and striking visuals, the film transcends its horrific story and packs a chilling punch at the end—when it becomes clear that the chain of events has led to a system that fuels civil wars in neighboring countries.

The film was produced in collaboration with European television broadcasters. In fact, the fluidity between the small screen and the big screen is an integral part of Silverdocs, and is increasingly gaining currency in the filmmaking dialogue. Part of the initiative behind Silverdocs came from Discovery Communications. After its inception in 1985 as The Discovery Channel in the United States, the property expanded into a global media company in over 155



Australian filmmaker Hubert Sauper (courtesy of AFI)

The Silverdocs Summit

A united nations of filmmakers talk shop



Darwin's Nightmare won top prize at Silverdocs 2005 (courtesy of AFI)

countries. Television networks include TLC, Animal Planet, and Travel Channel.

In 2003, to bolster urban renewal, Discovery moved its offices from tony Bethesda to nearby multicultural Silver Spring. In conjunction, the American Film Institute renovated the local art deco Silver Theatre. The two organizations partnered to launch the annual Silverdocs, a showcase for nonfiction filmmaking created to bring culture and revenue to a community of pawnshops and malls. As development increases, local residents are taking a stand to preserve the racial, ethnic, and economic

diversity that gives their area a unique identity.

With a virtual United Nations at its front steps, festival director Patricia Finneran sees a future for Silverdocs as the premiere international festival for documentaries. “We’re building a foundation for filmmakers and leading executives from around the world,” she says. This year television funding partners from Europe and South Africa were invited to impart advice and listen to pitches at the festival’s industry conference. Joining the discussions were representatives from the locally headquartered pow-



Silverdocs opened with *Midnight Movies: From the Margin to the Mainstream*.

erhouses PBS, National Geographic, and Discovery. Along with a rep from New York-based HBO, the group was made up of the four largest commissioning programmers in the United States.

"The best way to see a film in the way the artist intends it is on the big screen, but the biggest audience will be on TV," said Cynthia Kane, manager of film

programming at the Sundance Channel, another significant broadcaster. Television has always been a key player in financing docs and bringing them to viewers. As the genre grows, and now that a handful of theatrical docs are the talk of the industry, television programmers are finding it easier to entice filmmakers who dream of seeing their name on a marquee.

In partnering with filmmakers, the group of US television executives at the festival agreed that cable pays between \$10,000 and \$1 million for a co-production, and that the average is about \$150,000. When filmmakers ask, "How much should I ask for?" the counter question is "How much do you need?" Asking for seed money or completion funds may be more appropriate. (Proposal submission information is available on company websites.)

Allison Winshel, a senior director of primetime programming at PBS, stated that her company might be more apt to give money to a mission-driven work that wouldn't find funding in the commercial arena. "We want filmmakers to look at PBS as a partner to help shepherd them

through the process and identify finishing funds, or to make an early commitment with them that they can use as leverage elsewhere," she said.

To fete filmmakers and generate buzz for a television show, celebrity red carpet screenings perform the same function as theatrical premieres. Silverdocs opened with *Midnight Movies: From the Margin to the Mainstream*. Produced and directed by Stuart Samuels, the film explores how midnight features impacted popular culture and society, and includes interviews with cult-movie icons such as George Romero, David Lynch, and John Waters. Starz Encore cable channel subsequently aired the original documentary as a kick-off to a series of midnight movies on the station.

After the screening, "Good Morning America"'s Joel Siegel interviewed an enthusiastic Samuels. "The future is not film," Samuels said. "It's video. The question is how to change viewing video from the small to the large screen, to go from an intimate perspective to one of being enveloped with image and sound."

The selection worked well for an open-

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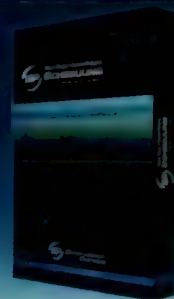
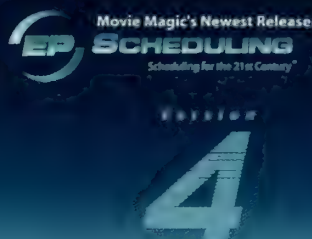
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Boys of Baraka is about ghetto-raised Baltimore youths living in a boarding school in Kenya (courtesy of AFI)

ing night because it conveyed the magic of the 1970s glory days of film-going. It also included appearances by industry players of the time, such as Ben Barenholz, former owner of the innovative Elgin Theatre in New York.

James Dean: *Forever Young* was the festival's closing night film, which went directly to DVD. Purists may believe that nothing short of a 35mm Cannes prizewinner deserves to hold a key festival slot, but that philosophy doesn't square with today's small screen/big screen interdependence. The festival's audience award winners were *Street Fight*, about a mayoral election in Newark, and *The Boys of Baraka*, about ghetto-raised Baltimore youths living in a boarding school in Kenya—both funded by ITVS and P.O.V. There may be no better festival to bring films that put social issues on the table in front of policy makers and non-profits. In the DC area, even the cab drivers are eager to talk politics.

A highlight of the festival was Werner Herzog's Discovery-produced *Grizzly Man*, which was released this year by independent distributor Lions Gate Films. The story follows the naturalist Timothy Treadwell as he lives among the grizzly bears in the Alaskan wilderness and is eventually killed and eaten by one of them. Editing Treadwell's own video footage, Herzog constructed the story of the troubled man and provided insight into his psychological state. After the screening, Herzog called the film a sequel

to *Aguirre: The Wrath of God*, his 1972 masterpiece that helped define the movement of "New German Cinema." Herzog invited audiences to draw parallels between Treadwell and Klaus Kinski, who played the conquistador Don Lope de Aguirre on a doomed expedition into the Peruvian rain forest.

Also screened, *Comedians of Comedy* is a behind-the-scenes look at a group of alternative comics, which was produced by online DVD movie rental service Netflix in their first foray into filmmaking (see page 44).

The festival's keynote speaker and featured filmmaker was Kopple's contemporary, Penelope Spheeris. A pioneering small screen music video maker, Spheeris presented a selection of videos from her company Rock 'n' Reel, the first music video company in Los Angeles, along with new works by current innovators such as Spike Jonze, Mike Mills, and Michel Gondry.

"If I could go back and do it again I would *never* do it for the money," she said, referring to the Hollywood projects she took on, such as *Wayne's World* (1992) and *The Beverly Hillbillies* (1993), following the success of her 1981 seminal punk rock doc *The Decline of Western Civilization*. With over 25 years experience as a filmmaker, her closing advice to new filmmakers: "Get educated about *every* aspect of the business before you start making decisions." ★

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Filmmaker Fritz Donnelly in his short, *Awkward Social Encounters* (photo courtesy of Fritz Donnelly)

Open Zone showcases a range of local talent

By Katherine Dykstra

It's Sunday night in Williamsburg, Brooklyn—the reigning annex of lower east side hipsterdom. Live jazz floats from the open windows of a Tiki bar, sidewalk cafes overflow with 20-somethings, and scads of the tragically hip mill around street corners as the summer sun retires. All the while, a dedicated audience heavy with filmmakers sits in a dark room watching short films with hopes of honing its craft.

The dark room is in Galapagos Art Space, a bar-slash-performance space known for its support of the burgeoning Williamsburg art scene since its infancy in the early 90s. And the short films are all those of New York filmmakers, brought to the screen by Ocularis, a not-for-profit dedicated to informing the

public conscious with contemporary film and video work as well as “independent, avant-garde and repertory cinema.”

“We screen work that is often excluded from the commercial media,” explains Thomas Beard, Ocularis’ program director. “Experimental film, documentary, video work, artist-made film, and world cinema that is under-shown in the United States.”

Founded in 1996, Ocularis started as a rooftop film series in Williamsburg, Brooklyn. It wasn't long after it began that Robert Elmes, the owner of Galapagos, attended a screening. He liked what he saw, offered to host the event, and Sunday nights at Galapagos were born. During a time when Williamsburg overflows with creative

outlets, “Ocularis keeps us awake and clever,” explains Elmes from his perch behind the bar. Since then, nearly a decade has passed, and Ocularis has grown markedly. The 501 (c) 3 nonprofit now encompasses curated screenings, one-man shows, and a host of collaborative efforts.

“When it began, Ocularis was very much a community affair. But over time what I’ve tried to do, and the people who held my position in the past have tried to do, is to bring in an audience from Manhattan and Brooklyn,” says Beard. “But since the work that we show typically has very few stewards, we have to reach out to institutes to work with us.”

And reach out, they have. This season, Ocularis in conjunction with the

Goethe-Institut brought the new-wave German filmmaker, Werner Schroeter's film, *The Death of Maria Malibran* (1971) to the screen. A few years ago, Tracy + The Plastics, a band created and performed by Wynne Greenwood, a feminist video artist, performed alongside work by the widely acclaimed filmmaker, Elisabeth Subrin. And this fall, the non-profit plans to show Joe Gibbons's dryly funny videos as well as the 1970s computer artist Lillian Schwartz's *A Beautiful Virus Inside the Machine*. Williamsburg and ultimately New York audiences may be hard-pressed to come by any of these events without an outfit like Ocularis.

Though Ocularis screens films at Galapagos every Sunday night, Open Zone, the forum for short filmmakers that is in full swing on this particular Sunday night, occurs only four times a year. Technically, the work shown is chosen on a first-come-first-serve basis, but the show isn't done in quite true open-mic fashion.



Cinefiles at a recent Open Zone screening (photo by Travis Hartman)

"Since they're screened in advance, the audience doesn't have to wait for the films to get cued up," explains Beard.

To prepare for Open Zone, Kelly Shindler and Melissa Fowler, co-coordinators of the event, put feelers out to filmmakers who have screened before. They email bulletins to the local film schools and print flyers to post in lower Manhattan. They also rely heavily on Ocularis' web presence as well as a host of other Internet resources such as Frameworks (www.hi-beam.net), an

experimental film discussion board.

"As far as outreach goes, we're kind of a small fish in a big pond," says 25-year-old Shindler, who writes for an art non-profit by day. "We see [Open Zone] as salon-like. People come in and out on a rotating basis."

While Ocularis and its Open Zone program is funded mostly by the Department of Cultural Affairs and the New York State Council on the Arts (NYSCA), the group isn't rolling in dough, which though sometimes creates difficulties, according to Shindler, can also be extremely liberating artistically speaking.

"It seems the more money you get from sponsors the more accountable you are. Since we don't get much money, we're allowed to take more risks," she explains. Essentially, Open Zone doesn't turn anyone away, which, as one might imagine, can make for a rather eclectic selection of films.



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Small Microphones, a short by Fritz Donnelly

"Unlike our other programming, [Open Zone] tends to be kind of a mixed bag," says Beard, with just the right amount of creative diplomacy. By mixed bag, of course, he means that though many films are interesting and even well done, some can be extremely amateur to say the least. "But in a way, there's something nice about how random it can be," he adds.

Right now, in Galapagos' spacious back room, a rotating cast of about 50 come and go as a woman in red runs through a 60-second "music video" (*Marathon with Myself* by Rolyn Hu); a pair of male legs, mirrored on the horizontal, pliés and kicks over and over for eight long minutes, until the climax when the man collapses (*3/0* by Rotem Tashach); and a mock-tourism ad, "Go Williamsburg!" pokes fun at the so-cool-it's-lame neighborhood of Williamsburg [*Go Williamsburg (Texas Justice Mix)* by Ben Coonley]. Every once in a while the rumble of the ice machine unloading, a rush of toilet water flushing, or a creaky protest from one of the folding chairs momentarily disrupts the quiet, but no

one seems to mind. The focus is entirely on the films.

"This was my first time at Open Zone, and I really liked that people were trying to express different types of ideas with a different medium," says filmmaker Fritz Donnelly, who showed three related shorts that ran about 7 minutes called *Awkward Social Encounters*. "It seems to me that there's a lot that can be done with film, such a wide range of expression is possible. Films like these give you a new pair of eyes."

The films ran a gamut between experimental and traditional, finely tuned and rough-around-the-edges. Some of the filmmakers had created their films that very day, and others finished their films only moments before they were screened. Rolyn Hu had a minor mishap with *Annihilate*, the film she had originally planned to screen, and so, in an effort not to miss the opportunity to screen, she hastily put together the minute-long "music video" which, actually, was very well received.

"So many films are made [through] a large process working with many people,

which tends to lead to either a consensus work or something very authoritarian," says Donnelly. "Interesting things happen when films are made more immediately, and there's a faster decision process."

And as far as Fowler is concerned, there couldn't be a better time for filmmakers to be working on short films—whether experimental or traditional.

"Recently we've seen a resurgence of short film," says Fowler, who is 44 and a full-time programmer of film festivals. "It's to a filmmaker's advantage to have a short because it's their calling card."

"Shorts have been embraced by complementary worlds," adds Shindler. "The art world, for example, has lent their credence to the genre. The last Whitney Biennial included short films."

Donnelly, whose series of action comedy shorts *How to Fight and Win* will screen at the new IFC theater in New York later this year, disagrees with the calling-card theory: "People don't use them to get more work." Though as he discusses short film in general, he lands on the reason most of the filmmakers are present at Galapagos

that night in the first place, “[they use them] to work on their craft.”

“I chose to show what I feel are my B-list movies because, there, it’s safe,” he says. “People risk things there.”

This seems to be the attitude of the majority. After introducing her film, *Concoctions*, Caitlin Berrigan asked that anyone with comments approach her after the show. “I’m open to all your feedback,” she said. Which is the reason screenings of this size are so beneficial to filmmakers who are still finding their feet. Shindler stressed that, “Works in progress are encouraged,” because a dialog is opened up after the show. Rather than simply taking off after the screenings, most people congregate and discuss what they liked, didn’t like, and how they think certain films could be improved.

“At most screenings, people watch the film in the theater and then make their exit right afterward,” says Beard. “But, because the filmmakers are there—almost all of them always attend—they linger and conversations begin.” ★



Marathon with Myself, a 60-second short by Rolyn Hu

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Q&A RYAN GOSLING

By Rebecca Carroll

Ryan Gosling brought me flowers when we met for this interview on a hot Sunday in July. Our earlier scheduled meeting had gone awry, and he was feeling badly for his part in the miscommunication. I don't mind saying that I loved the gesture or that I'm a huge fan of Gosling's work—even before he brought the flowers.

We sat at an outdoor café in Brooklyn and talked informally for a good 20 minutes before the interview got started. I was nine months pregnant at the time, and Ryan was genuinely curious about what it felt like to be so pregnant, to be anticipating a new life—this new person to whom I could introduce so many cool things. His inquisitive nature and gentle questioning is indicative of the kind of actor he is—he doesn't want to intrude, but he wants to know, to learn, and he is eager for a real exchange to take place.

The characters Gosling has played in his independent film career thus far are simultaneously lucid and diminished—clear in thought, even if that thinking is twisted by societal terms (Danny in *The Believer*, 2001), focused and gifted, even if completely lacking in ambition (Roy in *The Slaughterhouse*, 2002), compassionately murderous (Leland in *The United States of Leland*, 2005). All are paradoxical characters with no easy way out—among the best kind to watch and clearly the right kind for an actor like Ryan Gosling to play.

RC: When you were doing press for *The Believer*, you said that what you learned from playing Danny was that nobody really ever thinks they're wrong—nobody thinks they're a bad person. And that is really striking to me because where then, in film and in



Ryan Gosling in the thriller *Stay* (Eli Reed/Twentieth Century Fox)

real life, which I think is more often and better depicted in independent film, does accountability come into play? Danny, this Nazi Jew, doesn't think he's wrong, but how does he end up ever being accountable for his actions?

RG: Accountable to who?

RC: To himself or to the people he directly affects, who maybe are trying to love him and help him live?

RG: I remember seeing some guy on "Maury Jewish" or "Rocky Lake"—a black guy who hated black people. He was wearing blue contacts, had dyed his hair blonde. He hated everything that he was. And I didn't understand how he was alive.

RC: You mean why he didn't kill himself?

RG: Yeah. With the passion in which he spoke about his disdain and disgust for a race that he was part of, I couldn't understand how he got through the day. It really made me think about who you

are versus what you are and how those things can be very different. And when I read the script for *The Believer*, I was reminded of that guy. Danny went to yeshiva, grew up in a predominantly Jewish neighbor-

hood, and eventually was going to Torah study class by day and KKK and Nazi rally meetings at night. And he was bringing knishes. But Henry [Bean, the director] took it to another level—he saw Danny as someone who wanted to be a Jewish Nazi. He didn't want to be just one or the other. He wanted to be both. And he wanted that to be okay.

RC: Do you think that kind of dichotomous existence is very rare or more common than we might think?

RG: I don't know, but I grew up around some really amazing people—real individuals. I was introduced to life through these really incredible people who weren't necessarily happy with either who they were or the course that their life had taken. There was an inherent disappointment. It always interested me, and it still interests me—how that happens and what that's like.

RC: And that's what I mean about accountability—I guess the issue is really about being accountable to yourself. Playing Danny had to have been an extraordinary experience for you.

RG: Oh yeah. I had no idea—I kind of have more of an idea now—but I had no idea then what it was exactly that I was going to do [with my career]. And this script came along, and for some reason, in a way that I could not articulate, I knew [this film] was something I had to do. And I didn't know why, but I knew I wouldn't understand until I did it.

RC: And do you now understand?

RG: I guess I realized that the thing that centers me the most as a person, is to find common ground with other people. I really dig when I meet somebody that is completely different from who I am, and we talk for a while, and I figure out that we've got this place where we both live—everything else is different, but there is this one place where we both meet. To take somebody like Danny and work through to find that place where we both live was a really important thing for me. And from that experience, I learned that in this whole thing, movies, the whole business, there is a place for me where I can take these people who seem

so different from me and figure out where we're the same.

RC: You've done some Hollywood films—how do those experiences measure in contrast to your work in independents?

RG: I know how hard it is to make a movie, especially a big movie, and most of the people involved in creating the thing bust their ass to make a movie that people will enjoy. Now granted, a lot of times it's about making money, so they want you to enjoy it so they'll make money—but they're still trying to make something that you'll enjoy. And that can't be wrong. If you're paying money for something you enjoy, and someone's working hard to give you that—that's a pure exchange. It's just not how I want to spend my time.

RC: Why not, if it's a pure thing?

RG: It's a little more selfish for me—a little more about figuring things out. You know, sometimes you just want to go to

the theater and make a movie about justice. And the people who make those movies have the greatest time ever, and the stories they tell are fantastic. But for me, making something like *The Believer* is more fun, because when I leave it, it gives me a bit more perspective on myself, and that settles me.

RC: *The Slaughter Rule*, a great film. I've wondered about the relationship between David Morse's character, Gideon, and your character, Roy, in the film. I've read that some see Morse's character as a paternal figure, but I saw him as being kind of in love with Roy.

RG: Well, the great thing about that is I can't answer that. I would always ask him, "Dave—is he into me? Or is he not into me?" And he wouldn't answer. I auditioned for that movie, and I knew I had to work with [Dave]. I read with him, and I didn't know where he was coming from, but wherever it was I had to find out. I knew that working with David Morse was going to make me a better actor. And it did.

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RC: I was surprised the film didn't get more attention.

RG: I think it's a confusing film because it's not a sports movie, and it's not this other kind of film...

RC: And it has to be something, right?

RG: It doesn't have to be something. It is what it is. But there's no real name for it yet. So it's hard to market, and everything is about marketing now. There are so many options, and if you're someone who works hard for your money, and you've got ten dollars to go to the movies, you kind of want to know what it is you're going to see. And if somebody has a hard time explaining to you what it is, then you might go see something else. I think we're really at a point of transition with the kinds of movies we're making.

RC: I think so too, but what exactly is that point of transition? What is happening with all this marketing and all these options now?

RG: Well, what's happening is that marketing is a new art in and of itself. You really only have to make a trailer and a poster that's appealing [to sell a movie]. And that's it. What the movie is—doesn't really matter. They're really just the trailer but longer.

RC: You mean studio films or independent?

RG: With a couple of the films I did after *The Believer*, I started to see that the people making the film knew by a week or two before the film came out how much money the movie was going to make. By test audiences, by polls, by whatever it is they do—they knew how many people were going to go see the movie. So that now, before a movie gets made in a studio system, it has to run through the marketing people. Here's a script—from that, it's: how can it be marketed and who's attached?

RC: And with independents?

RG: The independent world, which really isn't independent anymore, has

kind of turned into something else. It's a great time to be working in it though because there aren't a lot of rules. If you can get around the right people, I think you can try a lot of stuff now. There's a new independent film—I don't know what it is, but it's coming.

RC: Is that because the old independent film has been divvied up into various branches or arms of the studio system?

RG: It's also fallen into this kind of pattern, which I'm not into, where to be independent it has to be a dark, depressing point of view—where everyone is humorless and life is just so hard. And we need to reflect that because people are going through it and isn't it terrible. But I don't think that's what life is like at all. And I don't think that's what people are like at all. People are amazing and can be happy in situations that you can't believe. I was just in Chad recently at the Darfur refugee camps—I've never been around people that were happier or more present in my life. And I feel like we do them a



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disservice when we [try to] reflect those who have gone through a difficult time.

RC: But it is hard to figure out how to get an idea of what others have experienced or are going through, and to make a difference and be solid with your intentions.

RG: I think independent film started out trying to say [in reaction to studio films]: I don't look like that person, I don't talk like that, my life isn't like that. I don't identify with that at all. So I'm going to make a movie about what it's really like. But now I think we've gone so far the other way that that's not what it's like either.

RC: You've got a film coming out next month called *Stay*, directed by Marc Forster—what was your experience like working with him?

RG: The thing about Marc—and I hope it's okay to say, because I feel like it's kind of what makes him the filmmaker that he is—is that at a very crucial point in his young adult life, he experienced two complete extremes. He had all the money in the world and then had absolutely nothing. And it was almost overnight. He and his family went from having an embarrassment of riches to living, I think, in one room with each other. And Marc was happy in both worlds. So he makes movies from that place, and I think that's a real gift to us as people who love movies.

RC: How did you come upon the project?

RG: I read the script, and then I met with Marc. I knew after meeting him that working with him was going to help me be better.

RC: And that's definitely a factor for you when you're choosing what you want to do—whether or not it's going to make you better.

RG: I get bored easily. I want to keep things interesting. And I know that when I meet people like Henry Bean or David Morse or Marc Forster, that I'm



David Morse and Gosling in *The Slaughter Rule* (Cowboy Pictures)

going to learn something from knowing them. I can stay in this place that I'm in and try to feel comfortable, but I know that there's more, and that certain people I meet seem to have it.

RC: And do you feel that you also bring as much?

RG: I think what I bring is—I'm a fan. I'm a real fan. I really admire people who are doing things and saying things that I'm not—I want to be around that and learn where that comes from. So I meet these people who are real individuals, who are great at what they do and are great people, and I want to figure out how to be that—or what that is.

RC: But do you think that you bring as much? You're a fan, but would someone say the same about you—that Ryan is really good at what he does and is an excellent individual, someone I want to be around?

RG: Yeah. I feel like I've had the opportunity to do some pretty amazing things in my life and to meet some pretty incredible people. So I love to meet people who haven't had those experiences and tell them about them. And I know that I affect people when I do. I feel like that's what I do when I work—I just try to tell people about the experiences I've had. I think that's what I have to offer.

RC: The film that you're shooting right now is called *Half Nelson*—tell me a little about that.

RG: Ryan Fleck and Anna Boden had a short film called *Gowanus, Brooklyn*

that won Best Short at Sundance, and they're making it into a feature. I've never had more fun making a movie, ever. \$700,000 budget, there's only like a couple of actors in it, and everyone else is kind of just living their life in the movie.

RC: It's about a social studies teacher and his student at a public school in Brooklyn, right? Where are you shooting?

RG: In Fort Greene. It's great. I'm living three blocks away from the school where I'm teaching. I wake up at 6:30 am, I go to class—I teach 25 kids, who are in the school that they go to.

RC: It's a white teacher and a young black female student?

RG: My character sees this student who's at a point in her life where she's ready for somebody like him, but he doesn't know who he is. They're both trying to be the people that they see in each other. I really wanted to work this way—where you get to throw anything at the wall and see what sticks, which you don't get to do when there's a lot of money at stake.

RC: Well that's the idea behind independent film, right?

RG: Right, but this is it in effect. This is exactly why you want to make independent movies because you get to really figure it out. You get to try things that you're not sure about and see if they work. ★



Former Enron CEO Jeff Skilling, from Alex Gibney's *Enron: The Smartest Guys in the Room*, a Magnolia Pictures release (AP Worldwide)

Looking For Funds in All the Possible Places

BY DEREK LOOSVELT

"To be good at landing financing," says Alexis Alexanian, producer of *Tape* (2001), *Tadpole* (2002), and *Pieces of April* (2003), "you have to be resilient and willful, understand marketing and the marketplace. You have to know what you need and who your film will appeal to."

Maggie Renzi, whose production credits include *Sunshine State* (2002), *Silver City* (2004), and nine other films directed by John Sayles, adds that finding funds for independent features isn't a question of winning but of survival. "You have to learn how to duck and dodge," she says. "With no system in place to finance these films, you're at the mercy of business trends."

Today, this means battling against the increasing reliance on star power—name actors and name directors—to land funding. As an example, Renzi points to the difficulty she had locating production money for Sayles' *Silver City*, whose cast includes Chris Cooper, Richard Dreyfuss, Tim Roth, Thora Birch, and Daryl Hannah, among others. "Sure," she says, "we didn't have Brad Pitt, but come on."

Although Sayles' name guarantees little in the way of production money in today's marketplace, Renzi notes that names such as Pedro Almodovar's do. "And [Jim] Jarmusch's stock is up again," she says. "Though he'd be the first to tell you it could

The current state of independent film financing

fall at any moment. So much is getting funded on what's young, hip, and now."

Still, it's the young—and often gifted—first-time filmmakers who have the hardest time locating funds, typically financing projects through companies such as Visa and MasterCard in the form of high interest rate, credit card debt. Other common avenues for first-timers include loans from family and friends, and setting up limited liability partnerships, conglomerations of individual-investor production dollars traded for equity stakes.

First-time director Georgina Riedel, whose film *How the Garcia Girls Spent Their Summer* (2005) premiered at the Sundance Film Festival last January, went to her bank account, her family, and a few other people for funding. "I did a lot of

begging," she says. "You can't have any shame."

As is customary and often essential on lower-budget, independent films, most of *Garcia Girls*' actors and crew worked for close to nothing or deferred their salaries for future earnings. In addition, Riedel, her DP, and her editor, who had all worked in the industry before, making shorts, mined their contacts for favors. "You have to tell people straight up what you can afford," she says. "For example, we gave the film lab a number and told them, 'This is all we can pay.'"

Riedel says she received a lot of help that way, adding that she might've received even more had she first attached Elizabeth Peña and America Ferrara, two of *Garcia Girls*' more well-known actors. Both signed on just one week before filming began. Acknowledging that it's difficult to get money without actors and difficult to get actors without money, Riedel says next time she'll do her best to attach actors before looking for money.

With or without names, Alexanian stresses the importance of putting a project in front of as many people as possible, including independent distributors, talent, corporations, and individuals. "Everybody's looking for something," she says. "Sometimes it works quickly, sometimes it takes years."

The good news for first-time and experienced independent filmmakers alike is the increasing number of open financing avenues. Ten years ago, most independent production companies were forced to look outside their offices for funding, but now, several firms such as IFC and Hart Sharp Entertainment have their own production money. Independent studio arms such as Paramount Classics, Sony Pictures Classics, and Fox Searchlight pictures have deep pockets for finance distribution, and foreign production companies are actively paying for the rights to distribute US films overseas. (To understand to what extent and to learn the names of the foreign companies doing this, log on to the Internet Movie Database, www.imdb.com, and check out the "company credits" link on a few recent US indie titles.)



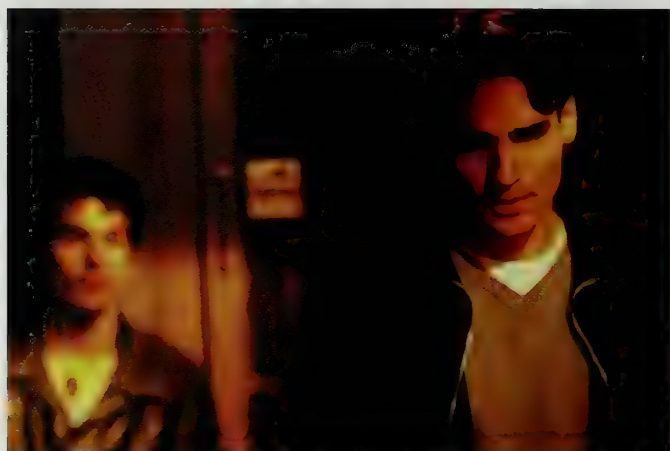
Georgina Riedel, writer/director of *How the Garcia Girls Spent Their Summer Vacation* (Jesse Grant/WireImage.com)

Equally important, the cable and DVD markets are providing additional outlets for films and longer film lives, boosting financing alternatives in the process. Equity investment companies that exclusively focus on film are popping up more and more, and independent production entities such as HDNet Films (*Enron: The Smartest Guys in the Room*, 2005) and InDigEnt, Alexanian's employer when she produced *Pieces of April* and *Tadpole*, have structured themselves to make films the Dogme 95 way, capitalizing on digital technology to develop several movies a year with relatively low budgets. (*Pieces of April* was made for about \$300,000; *Tadpole* for \$150,000.)

Although technological advances have certainly made filmmaking more democratic, giving more people the financial ability to pick up a camera and make a film, many producers agree that the quality of films, in general, has gone down as a result. "People are jumping in too early," says Alexanian. "You need to have a solid script, especially in a low-budget digital production. A solid foundation is essential." Other ramifications also exist. "With so many self-funded films, producers and distributors have so much product to choose from that they don't think they have to get in [on the financing] early," Renzi says. "The perception is, 'Anyone can make a film.'"

Renzi admits the problem isn't technology. Instead she blames "the general degradation of viewers' choices. It's sad we have to force people to go to the movies to see better films."

The proliferation of the film festival also has a dual effect. Though festivals provide outlets for nearly every genre of film, showcasing projects to the all-important distributors, they also boost supply at the expense of demand. "It's marvelous that there's an entire list of festivals that no one's ever heard of," says Esther Robinson, Creative Capital's program director for performance and film/video. "But with so much out there, companies can fill their channels while paying very little. And they can wait until films are completed to do it." Robinson adds that it's feasible to spend \$15,000 to \$20,000 to produce a rough cut. "But for a quality feature that has a life," she says. "You can't make it for anything under \$300,000." (For a sense of what dif-



The resilient Alexis Alexanian produced *Tape*—starring Ethan Hawke and Robert Sean Leonard (IFC)

ferent amounts of money might get you, *Sideways* (2004) was made for an estimated \$16 million, *Crash* (2004) for \$6 million, *The Station Agent* (2003) for \$500,000, and last year's Sundance Film Festival Dramatic Grand Jury Prize-winner *Primer* (2004) for \$7,000.)

Though the promised land for most first-time filmmakers is a dark theater in Utah where hundreds of bodies fill reclining seats and a multi-million dollar distribution deal, the odds of getting there are anything but good. The Sundance acceptance-to-application ratio for features stands at about 2 percent, and each year only a handful of accepted films get picked up for theatrical release. A few more, to an even lesser extent, will be bought at the New York Film Festival and Austin's South by Southwest Film Festival. To date, Riedel's *Garcia Girls* has yet to find a distributor, though she does have a sales rep (a company that signed on before the film landed Sundance), as well as a healthy amount of optimism. *Garcia Girls* recently won an audience award at North Carolina's RiverRun International Film Festival, and Riedel says she's been as far as Portugal and Moscow to promote the film, "trying to get the word out."

According to Robinson, quality projects are out there, but the money isn't. At Creative Capital, she receives some 1,800 grant applications from film and video makers each year. Of those, about twenty receive project grants of up to \$50,000 each. "If we had the money," she says, "I'd fund between fifty and seventy without hesitation."

Indeed, grants, while viable financing options, aren't easy to get—and some might take more than they give. Riedel, who applied for grant money to fund *Garcia Girls* during the two years she spent making the film, says, "We didn't think \$20,000, which isn't that much, in exchange for signing over TV rights or having to premier on a certain channel made sense." Riedel decided to forego the grant route, opting to finance on her own. "There are a lot of good grants out there," she concedes. "But if they want something in return, in the end they're not worth it."

Robinson, Renzi, and others note that the deepest pocket of money in the country—the US government—has become a lot lighter with respect to financing films. In 1996, the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) ended its practice of giving grants to individual filmmakers. Although the NEA still doles out generous amounts of money to film and video festivals and organizations (including the AIVE, parent organization of this publication), the lack of individual grants places US filmmakers at a financial disadvantage when compared to their counterparts in Europe, Canada, and Australia where the independent film financing system largely functions on government money. One of the better known NEA grant recipients is Todd Haynes, writer and director of *Safe* (1995), *Velvet Goldmine* (1998), and *Far from Heaven* (2002). His first feature, *Poison* (1991), another Sundance Grand Jury Prize-winner, was partly funded by an NEA grant.

The US also lags behind other countries in providing investor tax relief to film investors. In an attempt to curb runaway productions (films made in a foreign country solely to cut costs), a film and TV provision was included in the American Jobs Creation Act of 2004. Although the provision gives tax incentives to filmmakers with budgets between \$1 million and \$20 million in return for producing within US borders, it does little to mask the country's lack of co-production agreements, which allow films to receive "domestic" status in more than one country and thus access to government financing and investor tax credits in more than one country as well. Many of the largest film-exporting nations, including Canada, France, Germany, Australia, Italy, India, and China, have signed these agreements with one another. So, for example, if a Canadian-Australia film qualifies as a co-production, the project would have access to financing money from government agencies such as Telefilm Canada and Film Finance Corporation Australia as well as to tax benefits to filmmakers in both countries.

Carole Dean, director of the Roy W. Dean Film and Writing Grants, which regularly gives grants to digital indie filmmakers of close to \$50,000, is optimistic. She says the time is ripe for new ideas in marketing and cautions filmmakers against judging films on the size of their audiences, noting that a film viewed by small audiences can still repay investors and turn a profit, allowing its creator to develop another. Dean advises filmmakers "not to let anyone give up DVD distribution unless they get a bundle. This distribution window is enormous. It's become one of the best income generators for filmmakers." She also says "not to worry if you're panned or banned. Experiment. Be bold. Be brave. Create your own filmmaking rules and keep stretching yourself and your work—and let the industry catch up with you."



John Sayles's film *Silver City*, whose cast includes Chris Cooper, Richard Dreyfuss, Tim Roth, Thora Birch, and Daryl Hannah, among others, originally had trouble finding financing (Newmarket Films)

In the meantime, producers are finding it increasingly necessary to be as creative as filmmakers. For Sayles' latest film, *Honeydripper*, Renzi went to the home entertainment community, where Sayles' films do very well, after exhausting "the people we've worked with before." She was able to strike a production deal with Netflix. Of the DVD rental service, Renzi says, "They're great. They don't claim to know what they don't do." *Honeydripper* will be the first film Netflix has produced [see page 44].

Brad Anderson, director of *Next Stop Wonderland* (1998) and *Happy Accidents* (2000) took his latest film overseas to get money. He couldn't land funding in the US for *The Machinist* (2004) even with *Batman Begins* star Christian Bale attached. Ultimately, Anderson financed it in Spain where his cult-film *Session 9* (2001) had racked up some impressive receipts. As part of the deal, Spanish production company Filmax International required the film to be shot in Barcelona.

Alexanian tells a similar story about financing *Long Way Round* (2004), a documentary series following actors Ewan McGregor and Charley Boorman on a motorcycle trip around the world. "It sounded like a winner," says Alexanian, who now runs Elixir Films with her brother David Alexanian, *Long Way*

Round's director. "We had a lot of faith in Ewan McGregor and Charley Boorman, and it was much better than the crappy reality TV projects we typically get. But when we took it to the marketplace, the TV industry wanted to know exactly what it was. People were asking, 'Is this "Survivor"?"

Alexanian didn't want *Long Way Round* to be pigeonholed and, as a result, Elixir ended up cash-flowing it in its early stages. After unsuccessful attempts to get money from large corporations such as BMW, Elixir saw the potential for a book tie-in and took the idea to a UK-based publisher, who bought the rights. The money from that deal helped finance part of the series.

Alexanian admits Elixir was lucky to be in a position to be able put up bridge money, adding, however, "We were [also] willing to take that risk." Indeed, faith in a project and, certainly, a solid project are keys to locking up financing. Beyond that, it'll depend on how resourceful you are. "No matter what your background is, you have to be entrepreneurial," says Alexanian. "Anything can happen with a little ingenuity." ★



Picture's Up

The thing about Bob Berney

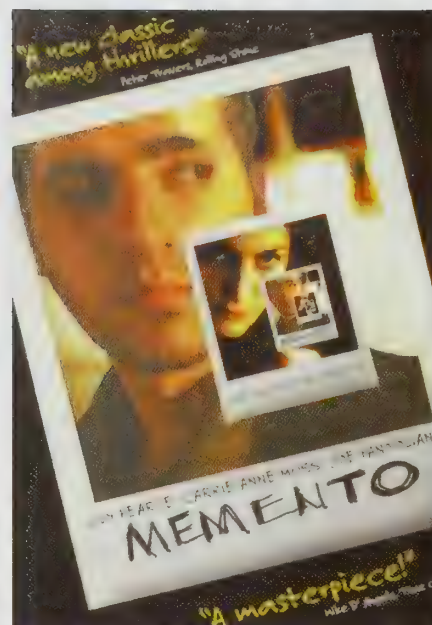
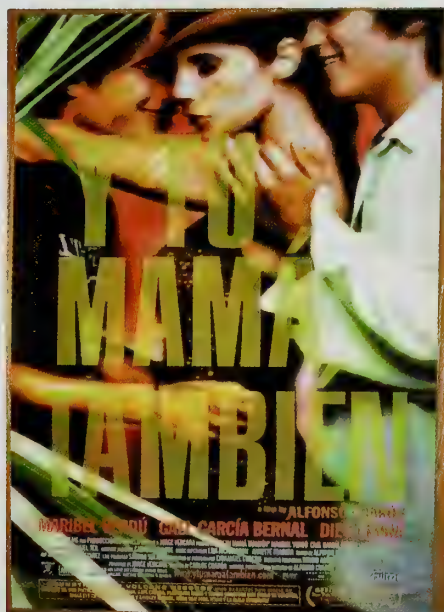
BY ETHAN ALTER

Everything you need to know about Bob Berney's taste in movies can be summed up by one simple fact: growing up, his favorite film was Stanley Kubrick's seminal sci-fi head-trip *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968). Of course, like most of us, he also had a soft spot for more, let's say, lowbrow fare. "As a kid, I remember loving all those Ray Harryhausen movies," says Berney in a recent phone interview, referring to the producer and visual effects guru best known for cult classics like *Clash of the Titans* (1981), and *Jason and the Argonauts* (1963). "But *2001* was the first one where I really recognized the director and his style. I think Kubrick probably had that effect on a lot of future film people."

2001 is also an apt choice because it was largely under appreciated by the industry at the time of its release. And as one of the country's leading distributors of independent films, Berney knows all about Hollywood's tendency to overlook good movies. After all, he's built a career out of taking chances on films that other companies wouldn't touch. Among the movies he's helped steer towards box-office success—and, in some cases, Oscar glory—are *Memento* (2000), *Y Tu Mamá También* (2001), and *Monster* (2003). He was also the man behind the

curtain on two of the biggest grossing independent films of all time—*My Big Fat Greek Wedding* (2002) and *The Passion of the Christ* (2004).

Berney's uncanny ability to spot a winner coupled with his sheer passion for film has made him a sought-after commodity of distribution companies and independent filmmakers alike. "When you get Bob, you don't just get a head of distribution," says Robert Schwartz, who first worked with Berney ten years ago at Orion Pictures and later followed him to high-profile gigs at IFC Films and Newmarket Films. "You get a head of distribution, a head of marketing and a head of acquisitions all



Bob Berney steered two risky films *Y Tu Mamá También* and *Memento* towards major box office success

wrapped up into one person. It's a rarity that you get someone with all three talents. He has the vision to see a film that others may view as difficult or challenging and know right off the bat how he's going to get it out there."

Now Berney is taking on yet another new challenge as president of the latest addition to the theatrical distribution scene, Picturehouse. Formed and co-owned with HBO and New Line Cinema, Picturehouse enters the game with an eclectic mix of nine films slated to roll out over the next year. Some titles feature the usual indie suspects like Gus Van Sant and Michael Winterbottom, while others have a decidedly more, dare we say, mainstream feel. According to Berney, that variety is part of the goal behind Picturehouse. "We want to make a statement that we're going to do all sorts of films, not just the ones you'd describe as art-house movies, but any movie that makes sense," he says. "Obviously we won't do big-budget action pictures, but we'll be open to a diversity of genres, scopes, budgets and releases. There are no restrictions at Picturehouse."

Bold words, especially considering that Picturehouse isn't as, say, independent, as IFC or Newmarket (neither of which are entirely independent themselves, but that's another story). Instead, it fits alongside New Line and HBO under the giant umbrella known as Time Warner, which means that Berney now has corporate suits to answer to—some of whom may have restrictions of their own. But Berney is quick to say that he's been given a great deal of autonomy in setting up his new venture. "Besides," he adds, "if you think about it, New Line started out as an independent company that acquired films. And HBO Films is known for creative risk-taking. So the goal is to make sure that the spirit within those companies carries over into Picturehouse."

As far as Berney's associates are concerned, if anyone can navigate the fine line between art and commerce within a corporate structure, it's him. "Bob has always taken chances and he'll con-

tinue to take chances," says producer's representative Jeff Dowd, who has known Berney professionally and personally for more than twenty years. "I don't think he's going to get more conservative with his new resources. In fact, I think it's fair to say that one of the reasons he took this job is that he wanted the opportunity to take more chances."

In Dowd's opinion, the secret to Berney's success as a distributor lies in his background in theatrical exhibition. After graduating with a degree in radio, television, and film from the University of Texas at Austin in 1976, Berney purchased Dallas's Inwood Theater, which he transformed into an art house that screened independent and foreign films. (The cinema still operates today as part of the Landmark Theaters chain.) Dowd remembers meeting Berney for the first time at the Dallas Film Festival when he was making the rounds with *Blood Simple* (the Coen brothers' 1984, indie-tour-de-force). "At that time, there were a lot of pictures that studios didn't think were going to work, but Bob knew they were working because he saw them with local audiences. He did a lot of listening and learning, and, as a result, he understands how specialized films might work at a local theater. In his mind, he's thinking: 'I've seen it work here and I'm sure it will work other places.'"

Berney eventually left exhibition behind for a full-time career in marketing and distribution, beginning with a stint at Film Dallas, part of the now-defunct New World Pictures. From there, he moved on to Triton Pictures where he worked on such movies as *Hearts of Darkness: A Filmmaker's Apocalypse* (1991), *In the Soup* (1992), and *A Brief History of Time* (1991). By the mid-'90s, he had moved up the ladder to vice-president of marketing and distribution at Orion Pictures and later at Banner Entertainment. He was still with Banner when he got involved in the release of Todd Solondz's sophomore film, *Happiness*, in 1998. The original distributor, October Films, had dropped the movie after its owner Universal Pictures expressed concerns

about its content. So Berney stepped in and created an independent distribution arm out of Good Machine, which produced *Happiness*, to get the film out to theaters. The movie's subsequent critical and commercial success convinced Berney to strike out on his own as an independent marketing and distribution consultant. Two years later, he stumbled upon a low-budget thriller told in reverse called *Memento* and brought it to the attention of the fledgling Newmarket Films. And with that, his streak of successes began.

When asked if he has some kind of a sixth sense for spotting hits, Berney just laughs. "I wish I did. It's too crazy and pretentious to think that way, because, really, there are always going to be ups and downs. You start over on every new project; no matter what kind of success you've had before, you still have to look at the next one and figure out how it's going to work." Still, it's not surprising that his associates think he may have some kind of cinematic ESP. "The track record he's had is not by accident," says Schwartz. "It is what it is for a reason. It's true that no one picks a winner every time, Bob included. But I do think that he has great instincts."

For his part, Berney credits those instincts to a variety of factors, from seeing how a movie plays with an audience to his own personal response. "It can be a really visceral reaction," he explains. "If you're feeling something about a film that's really different or there's a performance that's exciting or a visual style that pulls you in. It's different on every one. I remember on *Y Tu Mamá También* I was struck by the road-trip feel of it. And with *Whale Rider* (2002) it was the performance by Keisha Castle-Hughes and the emotional payoff that came at the end." But he also admits that oftentimes success just comes down to good old-fashioned luck. "Luck and timing are big factors and sometimes you can be completely off. I don't pretend to have a formula—you're just trying to look at what you think works and how the financial aspects of the deal might fit with the company that you're with. Sometimes all these decisions just come aligned together at once. And sometimes it's just magic."

Berney's new partners at HBO and New Line are clearly hoping that he'll be able to tap into some of that magic as he gets Picturehouse up and running. "Bob's reputation in the independent film world is really without match in terms of being able to find and build audiences for movies that other people don't see how to market," says Keri Putnam, executive vice president of HBO Films. "He was really our first thought to run Picturehouse, and we were very lucky to get him." The new venture was announced at the Cannes Film Festival in May to coincide with the festival premiere of Gus Van Sant's new film *Last Days*, which was released under the Picturehouse banner in July.

Upcoming releases include Michael Winterbottom's comic romp *A Cock and Bull Story* and *The Notorious Bettie Page*, directed by Mary Harron and starring Gretchen Mol as the famed 50s pinup queen. Picturehouse will also be exploring the foreign film market with *Ushpizin*, an Israeli comedy/drama about a married pair of ultra-Orthodox Jews who inadvertently get involved with two criminals. "When I tell people that one of our first releases is an Israeli film about Orthodox Jews, they

go 'Wow, that's different,' and kind of scratch their heads," Berney says, chuckling. "It's a small movie, but I feel that, as with *Whale Rider*, a lot of universal truth comes out of it. I think it's going to surprise people."

Perhaps the film that Berney is most excited about, however, is *The Thing About My Folks*, a father-son story written by the actor Paul Reiser and starring Reiser and Peter Falk that Picturehouse is releasing this month. The movie was a labor of love for the former "Mad About You" star, who opted to produce the film independently in order to retain creative control. When shooting wrapped last fall, he shopped it around to various distributors but was disappointed by their reaction. "I'd meet people who would go, 'We love the movie, but we don't know how to sell it,'" Reiser says. "I'd say 'What do you mean?' and they'd go 'Oh it's too hard.' And I'd go, 'Of course it's hard!' Everything is hard—making a movie is hard, being creative is hard, getting up in the morning is hard!" Eventually, Reiser hooked up with Jeff Dowd, who immediately suggested bringing the movie to Berney's attention. In February, they invited him to a special screening of *Folks* close by his home in Westchester. "We chatted after the screening, and he said 'Let's talk tomorrow,'" says Reiser. "So the next day we met in his office, and he instantly started talking about how we should open the movie. At no point did he actually say, 'I'd like to do this.' I was like, 'Go back a minute Bob...so the answer is yes?'"

That meeting was Reiser's first exposure to another important component of Berney's MO: a close working relationship with the filmmakers and talent. "I like to try and make the experience personal rather than just layers of bureaucracy," explains Berney. "I get a lot of input from the filmmakers and work with them on the marketing and release pattern." In the case of *Folks*, Berney and Reiser have several marketing schemes in the works, including web-based advertising and the production of special trailers for the film with original content. Reiser and Falk have also committed to visiting every market where *Folks* is opening to publicize the movie. "We talk to Bob all the time," says Reiser. "We call him after screenings and we call with every idea. And he's always right on it—he doesn't dodge phone calls or e-mails. It's very refreshing." That personal attention is one of the reasons Dowd pushed Reiser to meet with Berney in the first place. "Let's just say that Charlize Theron wasn't kidding when she thanked Bob in her acceptance speech at the Oscars," Dowd says. "There was a very strong relationship there—he understood her performance and how people would respond to it."

With its gentle sense of humor and strong familial themes, *Folks* has the potential to be another *My Big Fat Greek Wedding*, a fact that everyone at Picturehouse is keenly aware of. "We're all looking forward to big things on that film," admits Schwartz, who Berney brought over from Newmarket to serve as the company's COO. Another movie generating a lot of buzz within Picturehouse is the Diane Arbus biopic *Fur*, directed by *Secretary*'s Steven Shainberg and starring Nicole Kidman as the renowned shutterbug. The project excites Berney not only because of the talent involved, but also because it's the first film that he directly had a hand in shepherding into production.



Peter Falk and Paul Reiser in *The Thing About My Folks*—one of Berney's favorite Picturehouse films—to be released this month (Picturehouse)

"We didn't plan on having a production going out of the gate—it just timed out very well," he says matter-of-factly. Shooting began in May in New York and the film will be released under the Picturehouse banner sometime next year.

While *Fur* marked Berney's first foray into production, don't expect to see the words "A Picturehouse Production" in front of every one of the company's releases. For now, his focus will remain primarily on distribution. As they go about building next year's slate, one thing he and his staff are still working out is how the films will be divided up amongst Picturehouse, New Line and HBO. "There are a few different ways the situation can work," explains Putnam. "Bob can acquire things for Picturehouse, or Picturehouse can release films that HBO or New Line fully financed, or films that we jointly financed. He'll probably also come up with other creative ways to find movies—including projects that he'll bring to the table—but that's the arrangement right now."

The other challenge facing Picturehouse is how to make a name for itself in the crowded landscape of specialized distribu-

tion. In fact, when the deal was first announced, it generated speculation about the future of Time Warner's other indie division, Warner Independent Pictures. Berney stresses that Warner Independent won't be affected by Picturehouse, although he does add that New Line's own specialty arm, Fine Line, will be retired. "I think Picturehouse will become one of the bigger distributors, in the area of Fox Searchlight or the former Miramax," he says. "But I think we're going to have a diversity that other companies typically don't have. We won't focus on certain kinds of films or only productions or acquisitions."

"Picturehouse is a way to make a new statement," Berney continues. "New Line and HBO are both inherently risk-taking, filmmaker-oriented companies, and this is a way for us to benefit from that and also have our own marketing and distribution expertise brought to bear. It gives us a lot of strength and depth to make movies. Ultimately, I hope that Picturehouse won't just fit into an existing slot on the independent film scene. Hopefully we'll create a new slot. ★



BY ELIZABETH ANGELL

For a documentary, *Deadline* (2004) was, by all accounts, a big success. The film, which profiled Illinois Governor George Ryan and his decision to condemn the death penalty in Illinois, toured the festival circuit to rave reviews and was nominated for a Grand Jury Prize at Sundance in 2004. Producers for NBC's *Dateline* made the unprecedented decision to show the film as a one-hour, prime-time special, the first time the network had aired an independently produced documentary in such a timeslot. Filmmakers Katy Chevigny and Kirsten Johnson tirelessly promoted the film through a special website and at viewing parties. It even made it into a few theaters. For a film about an issue as thorny as the death penalty, it was a pretty good run.

Then Netflix purchased a number of copies of the DVD, and Chevigny and Johnson found that all their work to get the film seen at festivals, on television, and through outreach programs was merely a prelude to the afterlife their film would find in countless Netflix queues. It is now doing brisk business on the website, with a new audience who might never have had the chance to see the film a few years ago.

"Prior to Netflix, you were dependent on this perfect storm of circumstances for anyone to see your film," Chevigny says. "They had to know about it, be free to go see it on the night it was playing, to have the cash, to not flake out. Now, all we need is someone who says 'I want to see that movie.'"

DVD-by-mail services—dominated by industry pioneer Netflix—may be fundamentally changing the landscape for independent filmmakers. Netflix currently has about 3 million members in the United States. That's a small fraction of the 70 million US homes with DVD players, but it's a number that the company says is growing rapidly. They currently mail a million titles every day from 35 shipping centers. Of the over 45,000 titles in stock, almost 35,000 are in circulation at any given time. Indies make up a good portion of that active inventory, meaning Netflix has the power to make a big difference to a little film.

In the past, most independent films were on their way to obscurity almost from the time that they wrapped. Many found their largest audience at film festivals. A small number got theatrical distribution, and an even tinier number made it onto the shelves of Blockbuster or Best Buy where people who missed them in theaters could maybe discover them. But if moviegoers didn't live in a major market, where arthouse theaters booked something other than studio fare, they missed most independents.

"That's been a critical, unsolvable problem for 30 years," says Chevnig. "What DVDs generally—and Netflix specifically—are able to do is capitalize on that buzz and word of mouth for people who are interested in independent films and documentary. You have to be able to feed that interest with ready access, and Netflix can do that."

Netflix didn't bring Chevnig and Johnson profitability, but it did reassure them that their film was more than a pet project. "I don't know whether [online DVD rentals] will affect our financial survival," says Chevnig. "But it's critical to our mission and to our justification that we're making an impact. If people can't see our films, it's almost like they're not movies anymore."

For Netflix's Chief Content Officer, Ted Sarandos, that's welcome news. "It is so frustrating that films are made and then

shown only once," he says. "You never know when a topic may come up and a documentary will suddenly be relevant all over again. These films exist in theater and on television, but they live on DVD."

Sarandos cites the success of *Capturing the Friedmans* (2003), Andrew Jarecki's film about a family of accused pedophiles, as one of Netflix's biggest successes. According to Sarandos, Netflix accounted for about 70 percent of the revenue that HBO Home Video pulled in for *Capturing the Friedmans*. "[The film] was hard to market because of the topic, but it was a high quality film and there was a high level of awareness, and that created a place for it online."

The popularity of independents and documentaries on Netflix can be credited to the company's internet-based business model, which is fundamentally different than that of traditional video rental outlets. In order for Blockbuster to make a profit on a film, it has to move several copies of one title. Hence, stores filled with *Harry Potter* and *Phantom Menace*. The heavy promotional budget and resulting ubiquity of such films virtually ensures that renters will seek them

out. Netflix stocks these titles, but it also stocks thousands of more obscure films—mostly classics, and independent and foreign titles—and these account for a good deal of its business. "The American movie-going public has an appetite for a broad, diverse range of movies and our model has always been to provide something for everyone," says Steve Swasey, Netflix's director of corporate communications.

Call it the "long-tail effect." Last year, *Wired* magazine's Chris Anderson wrote an influential piece about something that online retailers have known about for years: the power of near infinite choice to drive business away from mainstream media and towards a far broader spectrum of movies, books, and music. The "long tail" describes a graph that spikes early and then tapers out into a long, flat appendage. The spike represents best sellers: *Spiderman* (2002) or *The Da Vinci Code* or Britney Spears albums. These sell many, many copies and would justify



Capturing the Friedmans is one of Netflix's biggest successes (Andrew Jarecki)

“Prior to Netflix, you were dependent on this perfect storm of circumstances for anyone to see your film.”
—Filmmaker Katy Chevigny, *Deadline*

real estate on the bookshelves and movie screens of any city or town. They do big business for Netflix and Amazon too, but they make up only a portion of online sales. The long, flat tail represents everything else: obscure short-story collections, *Vera Drake* (2004), Sigur Ros albums. No one item does that much business, but taken all together, these titles sell many more copies than Ms. Spears ever could.

“Niche content finding a niche audience has been the internet’s promise since the beginning,” says Bo Peabody, a venture capitalist who is funding a DVD-by-mail site that launches this fall. (He declined to give details, citing the ease with which competitors might adapt his idea for their own purposes.)

Netflix can afford to stock its warehouses with titles that might appeal to only a few thousand or even a hundred viewers. It can use its website to make recommendations, a feature which has reportedly been wildly popular, driving users to good movies that didn’t make it to theaters in Phoenix or Cincinnati. Titles that did not have the time to find an audience can build a word of mouth buzz or satisfy the interests of a few fanatics who represent Netflix’s core business. Instead of just choosing the stuff in the biggest display case, it turns out customers are willing to be far more eclectic and experimental than retailers had previously assumed.

“There hasn’t been a film culture in the country since the 60s,” says Ryan Krivoshey, director of feature distribution for The Cinema Guild, an indie distributor. “The DVD boon has almost created a new film culture. People are following directors through Netflix, watching an entire career’s worth of work. It’s very exciting.”

That interest can even drive an audience to theaters to see new releases. “People who’ve rented something from Netflix because of a recommendation will then look for the next theatrical release from a director,” says Krivoshey.

Many credit Netflix with doing more than merely stocking indies. “They position independent films on an even playing field,” says Kathleen McInnis, film festival specialist at Loyola Marymount University, and director of programming at Palm Springs Short Film Festival. “They don’t ghetto-ize them.”

Recently, Netflix has expanded into DVD distribution, striking deals to package more than 90 independent films. *Born Into Brothels* won the Audience Award at Sundance in 2004 and then went on to beat *Fahrenheit 911* (2004) for Best Documentary at the Oscars, but the film did not have a home video deal. Netflix swooped in and packaged the DVD in return for an exclusive. The film will eventually be available everywhere, but for the first few months, Netflix will be the only place to get the DVD.

Sarandos and his team visit all the major festivals every year in search of new titles, as well as workshops and labs like this month’s IFP Marketplace in New York City. Netflix also has exclusive agreements with PBS, BBC, and the Canadian Film Board. They’ll happily release films that never hit theaters, certain that they’ll find an audience. Netflix and its ilk may eventually remove the stigma of straight-to-video.

“There’s this notion right now that if you didn’t have a theatrical release, you weren’t really a success,” says McInnis. “And that’s got to change. It’s just as valuable for the majority of indies to get out there and be seen.”

Netflix is also experimenting with soup-to-nuts production. Sarandos says that in this respect Netflix is modeling itself after HBO, which began its original programming juggernaut by acquiring films that couldn’t get theatrical distribution and eventually by producing original comedy specials. Last year, Netflix funded *The Comedians of Comedy*, a low-budget documentary about the alternative comedy circuit. It is making its way around the festivals now, and Sarandos is taking a wait-and-see approach to the future of Netflix-branded films. (HBO, for the record, is the largest producer of original, independent films.)

To be sure, Netflix isn’t the only game in town. Bay Area-based GreenCine is marketing itself as the online community for independent film lovers. “Netflix is very good at helping people find what they want,” says Jonathan Marlow, GreenCine’s director of content acquisition. “We’re good at helping people find things they didn’t know existed.”

The company’s approach is far more low-key. GreenCine seems to be counting on a backlash against Netflix’s aggressive



Vera Drake is part of Netflix's "long-tail effect" (Fine Line)

marketing strategy. Netflix, according to Swasey, is currently the largest internet advertiser. By contrast, GreenCine's site reads almost like a blog, with subtle graphics and lots of articles about up-and-coming filmmakers.

"We want to push films that we like and indie filmmakers," says Craig Phillips, one of GreenCine's two editors. "We have a real content and editorial background, and we use that to push things, rather than marketing. We want to promote films, not ourselves."

GreenCine has not invested in multiple distribution centers, so its subscribers must wait for their next DVD to arrive from San Francisco. But they believe that their subscribers will pay high premiums and put up with longer waits in order to be part of a community of independent film lovers who will offer informed recommendations.

Netflix believes its ease of use will counteract any upstarts. "The real value [to subscribers] is having a useful interface and customer reliability," says Sarandos. "The way you differentiate yourself in the space is to be good at it. We invented it, and we perfected it." Defensive swagger aside, Sarandos has a point. GreenCine can bill itself as a home for indies, but it will be hard for any website to offer a unique inventory unless they capture exclusives. Barring near unlimited warehouse space, it's almost impossible for any service to offer a demonstrably different selection.

It remains to be seen, of course, whether Netflix is the future of film distribution or merely a crucial bridge to something new. People may tire of Netflix as they have of over-lit, understaffed rental chains. And the web has enabled an active do-it-yourself movement. An Irish organization called Death to Hollywood (deathtohollywood.com) offers free downloadable movies and plenty of anti-Hollywood propaganda on their website, while

low-cost DVD duplication services like CustomFlix make it possible for people to sell their own films from their own websites. The problem of promotion has not yet been cracked. Though Netflix recommendations, like Amazon ratings, are incredibly valuable free advertising.

Then there's the promise of video-on-demand (VOD). For years, people have forecast a not-too-distant future where people will download movies directly to their TV sets. That would theoretically enable independent filmmakers to make their films available directly to consumers, without having to find distributors or even put up the cash for packaging. But again, promotion is the biggest hurdle any filmmaker faces. "The question is, how am I going to make a movie that you've never heard of relevant to you? It's a marketing challenge," says Peabody. "How do you connect consumers to content in a cost effective way?"

Sarandos and the rest of the Netflix crew are betting that independent operators will never find a satisfactory way around the problem. Filmmakers will still need a middleman. They're building their subscriber base now, so that whatever the future holds technologically, they'll be the gatekeepers for content.

"Netflix has conditioned people to be willing and happy to pay a subscription to access for video content," says Peabody. "DVDs are a way to capture subscribers so that, when VOD is a reality, you've got their credit card information, and you're already communicating with them by email."

In other words, true independence isn't a reality quite yet. It may never be. But online rentals have opened up a new audience for filmmakers and ensured that indies aren't relegated to increasing obscurity. "Just focus on the storytelling," say Sarandos. "And it'll find its way out there." ★

Eyes Wide Open

Cynthia López is the master marketer behind P.O.V.

BY KATE BERNSTEIN

Cynthia López is not a publicist. She does not believe in creating hype. Instead, López describes herself as a public media advocate. As director of communications and marketing at P.O.V. American Documentary, the PBS series, public relations has come to mean something wholly different from the usual marketing campaigns launched by film and television properties.

"I have friends that design campaigns for studios," says López. "That's not what I want to do. I want to have real conversations about painful things that happen in this country and find solutions as to how those things should never happen again. I don't even like calling my staff people publicists, that's not what they do. We do not just publicize shows, we think about the concept of the documentary, we think about how that concept works and what kind of conversation we want to have about it."

For every documentary that shows on P.O.V., Cynthia and her team develop what she calls a "public awareness campaign." Each film is looked at individually to identify the primary audience, the secondary audience, and any niche audiences that the filmmaker hopes to affect and address. After that, the campaign is tailored specifically to attract those audiences. This serves not merely to secure P.O.V. viewers, but also to inform them of the issues raised in the community the film depicts. And one of



L-R: PBS president Pat Mitchell, Eve Ensler, and Cynthia López (courtesy of PBS)

López's main goal is to lead audiences to documentaries that might help them better understand issues in their own lives. P.O.V.'s publicity initiatives then very often extend to facilitating educational workshops and discussions in the communities that each film addresses.

"In my sixteen years in media, I've seen amazing films go unnoticed," López says. "Amazing films that get distribution contracts and have no marketing money behind it. No one knows the film was even on television. So for us, marketing does play a pivotal and instrumental role in not only seeing the film



The *Two Towns of Jasper* filmmakers Marco Williams (left) and Whitney Dow on "The Oprah Winfrey Show"

but using the information in the film."

Of course, in order to achieve that goal, López does incorporate a traditional publicity methodology to her promotion. The standard press kit for a mainstream marketing campaign—press release, fact sheet, composite card, and slide—is still her bread and butter. Her office sends out 15,000 pieces of mail each year. López tries to ensure that every P.O.V. filmmaker gets the same amount of television, print, and radio interviews whether they're established or not. Yet, her department at P.O.V. is discriminating as to the outlets on which she encourages her filmmakers to appear.

"If you talk to some publicists, they'll say they tried to get a P.O.V. filmmaker and [that filmmaker] wouldn't do it. Usually because the context in which they wanted to have the conversation was not something acceptable to us," says López. "But 90 percent of time, we'll work very closely with very mainstream outlets to have the right conversation."

Perhaps one of the best examples of P.O.V. and López's marketing philosophy is their campaign for *Two Towns of Jasper*. The 2003 documentary by Marco Williams and Whitney Dow explores race relations in America by depicting the white and black communities in Jasper, Texas where, in 1998, a local black man was tied to the back of a pickup and dragged to his death by three white men.

"When I first took the project, people were like, 'Cynthia how are you going to promote this?' And I said we're not going to promote this—this is somebody's son that died, dismembered on a road. We're not going to promote that. We are promoting a conversation of racism in America," López says. "For me, it was

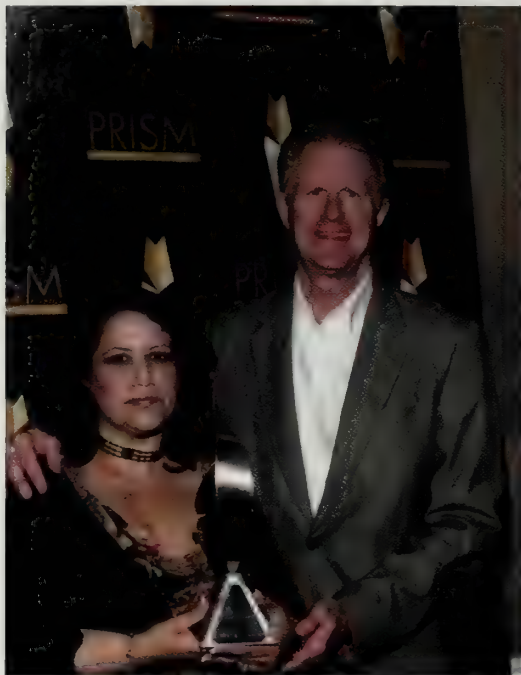
about having a conversation about what racism means, what race relations means, and how to bridge those gaps. When we have black kids saying horrible things about the white community and white kids saying horrible things about the black community, there's work to be done. The whole campaign that we built [for *Two Towns*] was to do that work."

In fact, even without the marketing dollars and requisite celebrity draw that often back major productions, López was able to "converse" about *Two Towns of Jasper* in the most mainstream of media outlets, including "The Oprah Winfrey Show" and "Nightline with Ted Koppel."

"I remember when Marco and Whitney came in, I asked them, 'If you had a marketing dream what would it be?' They gave us a list of what they wanted. I said give us six months to a year, we're going to make a piece of this dream come true," remembers López. "They laughed."

After nine months of negotiating contracts, López and the filmmakers were walking onto the Harpo lot in Chicago. The full hour of "Oprah" as well as her half hour after show were both dedicated to *Two Towns of Jasper*. The filmmakers and Oprah talked about the film, the horrific events it explores, and racism in general. For "Nightline," López partnered with the producers to create a segment called "America in Black and White," in an effort to raise public awareness about the issues important to the filmmakers.

"What I really liked about working with Cynthia was that it wasn't P.O.V. imposing, and it wasn't them simply doing what we said—it was a collaboration," says Marco Williams. "As an independent filmmaker, that's what you really want. It's like



Cynthia López and actor Ed Begley, Jr. at the 2005 EPPSilon Awards for Excellence in Entertainment Social Public Relations (P.O.V./American Documentary)

making a film—you work with a great camera person, you work with a great editor. You want someone who's very experienced. Cynthia was fantastic. She never deterred from her sense of responsibility. Her department takes the time to understand what your film is about, it's not just brash attention."

While every filmmaker might not make it onto "Oprah," P.O.V. filmmakers do tend to reach the audience they want to address. Carlos Sandoval, the creator of *Farmingville*, a documentary that explores the immigration debate following the attempted murders of two Mexican day laborers in Long Island, had similar things to say about working with López and P.O.V.

"Cynthia had us develop a dream list of places we wanted coverage, nothing was off limits. One goal that was really important to me was reaching out to the Latino market," says Sandoval. "Cynthia arranged to get us on Spanish-language radio stations across the country. We also wanted to hit communities that were experiencing a sudden flux of Latino immigrants so that *Farmingville* could be an object lesson. I knew Cynthia had delivered when a guy at a car wash told me in Spanish he recognized me from an early morning news show."

In fact, for Sandoval's campaign, López received a 2004 PRISM Award honoring excellence in issue-oriented public relations campaigns within the entertainment industry. Indeed, throughout her work at P.O.V., López has influenced a diverse set of communities—immigrant field workers, Mormons, Haitians. Most have been brought into the P.O.V. viewing universe with careful outreach of the highest caliber, often resembling political activism more than film publicity. And because P.O.V. is a nonprofit, and therefore does not have the advertising budgets of other films campaigns, Cynthia and her team have

been happily forced to think outside the box and come up with more creative campaigns and grassroots marketing.

Sandoval continues, "[For my film], she had to be Ginger Rogers to the networks' Fred Astaire—doing it all as well as them, but backwards and in heels. Given the budgetary constraints she and her staff had, they came up with some really creative solutions."

"In mainstream outlets, experimentation is very limited because they want to ensure the final quotient is something they can see at the end," says López. "You have huge advertising budgets and you saturate the top ten markets where the film is opening theatrically. You buy bus ads, subway ads, and on-air ads."

Affording none of that, López and her department hit the phones—calling community centers and reaching out to academics, journalists, and influential people in the communities the film depicts. López believes that even while mainstream films can spend millions on memorable ad campaigns to bring people to theatres or to a seat in front of the television, reaching out to niche audiences P.O.V.-style can bring the filmmakers' vision directly to their preferred viewers.

Yet, there is more than just dollars and innovative advertising tactics that sets López's brand of public relations apart from traditional marketing. "When I first started working at P.O.V. I said I wouldn't lie. I've worked in places where they lie, they skew demographics, they say they've gotten different markets, and they haven't. I won't and don't do that," López says. It helps that the integrity and quality of the work on P.O.V. makes it easy for López to stay true to her word.

Although the emphasis is on public awareness and not publicity, and market demographics matter much less than niche community outreach, the numbers of media placements (not to mention the quality of the placements) López has brought to P.O.V. during her five years as communications director speak for themselves. When she first arrived, the program was getting 660 press placements a year. Now, it has 5400 placements a year—a roughly 700 percent increase.

It's no wonder that López was appointed vice president of P.O.V. last year. The same attention and impressive results she garnered for P.O.V. filmmakers, she is working to attain for P.O.V. at large.

"When I came to P.O.V., I was like 'Oh gosh, the amount of effort we have to make to get an outlet to call us.' I told the team that it was going to take years to build the types of relationships where when an outlet needs the best documentary on a topic, they think of P.O.V.," says López. "We're at that place now. [And] it wasn't because the content wasn't there before, but one of the things I brought to P.O.V. was my ability to systematize in a different way. I've assisted in overall strategic planning from the beginning."

López has been able to help brand P.O.V. as a broadcaster of cutting-edge programming and has helped to construct a new look for the organization. In her vice presidential role, she is working with a brand development company to restructure how P.O.V. is perceived. López says that one of the main problems is that sometimes an audience will see a P.O.V. film on PBS but not



López convinced Ted Koppel (between filmmakers Marco Williams and Whitney Dow) to help publicize *The Two Towns of Jasper*

know it is a P.O.V. film. Her goal is to make sure that by the program's 20th anniversary in two years, every person recognizes and understands what a P.O.V. documentary looks like. To that end, López will venture outside of PBS to create collaborative partnerships with other organizations and corporations. She has already helped facilitate a P.O.V. deal with Netflix.

"Cynthia brings strategic knowledge of corporate practices, independent media issues, and public policy that is invaluable in an organization dedicated to promoting the use of nonfiction in the public interest," says P.O.V. Executive Director, Cara Mertes. "Her savvy approach to her work combines the best of the non-profit and for profit worlds. The awareness of P.O.V. as a center for high-quality production and presentation, as well as being PBS's premiere series for independent documentary, has reached an entirely new level under her guidance."

Looking at the trajectory of López's career, it is easy to see exactly how she came to be the well-honed Ginger Rogers of public television. Early on, López balanced her nonprofit media work with jobs in mainstream media outlets, working as an ad sales executive at Harris Publications, a company that publishes over 200 magazines. There she learned the advertising techniques that she would later transform into grassroots guerilla marketing strategies for future film projects.

The promotional initiative for P.O.V.'s current season concludes this month with Tod Lending's *Omar & Pete*, a documentary about two Baltimore men who have been in and out of prison for more than 30 years. The film follows the two friends after what they hope will be their final release. The men, however, end up taking very different paths. López saw *Omar & Pete* as a perfect opportunity to discuss issues surrounding rehabilitation in America and was able to build on the marketing efforts made for a previous P.O.V. film, *What I Want My Words To Do To You* (2003), about women in prison, for which López enlisted actress

Glenn Close to do promo work. "I like when we've established some work, and we can take it to a different level and go back and pump it up in a different way," says López.

While some of this season's P.O.V. films built on the strengths of past media campaigns, López also developed innovative techniques to raise public awareness and promote the broadcast of topics never before addressed on P.O.V. For example, through Mel Stuart's *The Hobart Shakespearians* (which airs September 6), about a teacher in Los Angeles who introduces Shakespeare to immigrant students, Shakespeare is addressed on P.O.V. for the first time. To raise awareness about the film, López will target junior high and high school students by providing an excerpt of the curriculum by teacher Rafe Esquith on the PBS website for teachers to view and perhaps duplicate in their own classrooms.

"To see these kids perform Shakespeare and relate it to their lives, and see if we can develop a campaign where other people could use that as an example, is a really good illustration of taking an independent film and pushing it a little bit," says López.

Who would have imagined that López originally set her sights on a career in medicine? "When I think about why I decided to do media versus medical school, it is because I really believe that media changes the way people look at the world," she says. No doubt her media philosophy came from a childhood viewing of her favorite cartoon, "The Jetsons." López asked her mother: "Is this really what society is going to look like in the future?" Her mother told her that the answer depended upon what she and her classmates were able to accomplish and what kind of change they sought to affect.

"And my hope," López beams, "is that a lot of the work I've done influences that [change] just a little bit." ★

Spike Wuz Robbed

The new bio is a minor glimpse into a major filmmaker



By Linda Chavers

SPIKE LEE: That's My Story And I'm Sticking To It (As told to Kaleem Aftab), W.W. Norton, September 2005

I was 11 years old when I saw Spike Lee's *Malcolm X* (1992). My mother was pretty strict when it came to movie ratings, and *Malcolm X* was rated PG-13. But she took me anyway and held my hand tight as we stood in the ticket line. I knew who Malcolm X was—I was an advanced reader for my age and had started his autobiography around this time—although I was rather abruptly forced to stop when I asked my father what a “rubber” was. I had not, however, ever seen or heard of Spike Lee, the film's skinny, bespectacled director who also starred as X's partner Shorty in the movie. But I walked out of that theater feeling like Spike Lee had stuck his hand through my chest.

At the time, I was attending an elite, mostly-white, girls school, and dealing with numerous painful identity issues. I remember bursting into tears during the scene when Denzel Washington, as Malcolm X, formed an “army” to get the proper attention paid to a fallen brother. I needed to see that kind of unity and pride beyond the confines of my own proud home. I craved it. Anyone who could deliver that in the form of a movie (and one that my mother would let me see) was, in my mind, a sort of magical figure.

In college at New York University—as I grew increasingly fed up with white people who felt they could talk to me any kind of way because they'd seen Talib Kweli at Irving Plaza or bought weed in

me to feel seen in exactly the way I wasn't in my everyday life. It is this ability to make black Americans feel truly seen that makes Spike Lee so simultaneously popular and unpopular in America. From the beginning, his films depicted black life in a wholly new and different way—blacks felt it, and the “white establishment” Lee was filming (and fighting against) saw it.

SPIKE LEE: That's My Story And I'm Sticking To It, as told to Kaleem Aftab, out this month from W.W. Norton, is a dense collection of background information on Spike Lee's 40 Acres and a Mule film company and the people, times, emotions, and motives involved with its 20-plus-year history. For anyone who is already a hardcore 40 Acres fan, this book

Harlem—*Malcolm X*, *Do the Right Thing* (1998), and *Bamboozled* (2000) allowed

will be a nice addition to their knowledge bank. Otherwise, while enjoyable for its behind-the-scenes, in-the-know tone, the book is most valuable for its interviews with Lee's colleagues, friends, and even a few of his enemies.

From his mentor at Morehouse College, Dr. Herb Eichelberger, to his repertoire actors like John Turturro and Giancarlo Esposito, readers may be surprised by the bluntness with which people talk about Lee. Esposito (who appeared most memorably in *Do the Right Thing* as Buggin' Out: "Sal, how come there's no brothers up on the wall?") in particular makes fairly sharp statements throughout the book on Spike's attitude toward interracial dating. "Through all my Spike Lee movies," he says, "I had white girlfriends, and Spike hated that. Mary-Anne was the first; she would come to the set and she would always be nice to him. But Spike would avoid her like the plague because he was at that stage where he hated white people." Spike's response, which appears in the book as a footnote, is why one has to love the book for its candor: "Bullshit...and if the truth be told, they weren't even fine white girls."

Disappointingly, of the people Aftab did interview, he neglected to include Lee's father, musician and composer Bill Lee, with whom Spike has had a complicated relationship and who may have provided some thoughtful insight into Spike's oft-criticized portrayal of women and interracial relationships. (The older Lee remarried a white woman after his wife, Spike's mother, died. Spike wrote a screenplay, *The Messenger*, which was never made into a film, about a black father who remarries a white woman after his black wife dies, and the great resentment it causes his son). There's very little comment in the book from Lee himself on these matters. His debut film, *She's Gotta Have It* (1996), which Lee wrote while he was still in film school at NYU, is regularly cited as the biggest offender when it comes to how his female characters are depicted and

treated. And while *That's My Story* does include the fact that Lee and a female classmate created a comprehensive questionnaire dealing with sex and sexuality to serve as research for the film—Are there any sexual acts you perform with one man and not another? Do you think you are sexually adept? What do you think about women and masturbation?—there is no explanation of its graphic rape scene, in which the main character Nola (Tracy Camilla Johns) is sodomized by one of her three lovers.

Interestingly, while doing publicity for his 2004 film *She Hate Me*, in more than one interview Lee expressed remorse over that scene. In an August 17, 2004 article for *The Advocate*, Lee says: "The biggest regret I have of any of my films was that rape scene in *She's Gotta Have It*. That scene makes light of rape and does not show the horrific violation that it is." It's a shame none of that regret or introspection made it into *That's My Story*.

There is, however, some poignant, inadvertent analysis on the topic from actresses Rosie Perez (*Do The Right Thing*) and Annabella Sciorra (*Jungle Fever*), who both recall crude sexual initiations on the sets of Lee's films. Perez says, "The ice cube sequence [in *Do the Right Thing*] was very disturbing to me—very disturbing...[it] wasn't what I had expected." In the film, Lee as Mookie cools down his girlfriend, Tina (Perez), on a hot day by rubbing ice cubes all over her body—Perez's bare breasts appear in more than one camera close-up. She continues: "I found it much more exploitative than what I had read ...I just think that [Spike] was irresponsible to put me in that position. He was the older person, the captain of the ship, and I really truly feel that as soon as he saw that I wasn't comfortable—completely shaken—he should have done something to help me."

Sciorra faced a similarly isolating scenario playing Wesley Snipes's love interest in the controversial *Jungle Fever*. "I think I called 'cut' because Wesley took off my underwear and I didn't have any-

thing on underneath. And to my knowledge that was not what we were doing." Lee's response to both women comes across in the book as flippant and cold. What we get from Lee on this is merely: "I need to work on the depiction of females in my pictures."

That's My Story offers page after page of the physical, economic, and mental frustration that has gone into the making of his films, but almost nothing on the struggles Lee experiences with the casting and shaping of women in his films (or lack thereof).

From his childhood days as the bossy big brother of five to his adult days as the bossy director of 50, Lee continues to be a successful pioneer and an original filmmaker. What comes across most vividly in the book's interviews is that he created something that had previously been missing: a diverse family of black editors, producers, writers, designers, and interns who used 40 Acres as a springboard to success. Despite Perez's earlier criticism, her final words on Lee speak both to why he's still on his game and why his flaws are often ignored: "Outside of whether you feel the portrayal of women is positive or negative, there's so much more that he's saying outside of that that it's unbelievable."

A small but remarkable point of frustration is Aftab's tiresome fondness for footnotes—particularly as he footnotes the definition of "kill-fee" but not "dailies." And throughout the book, one can't help feeling that Aftab may have been better off telling this story as a documentary film. Unlike *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*, which was told to and written in the first person by Alex Haley, *That's My Story* is written in the third person and with so much technical detail, the narrative acquires a dull "and then, and then" feel.

In the end, it is Lee's voice that readers most want to hear describe his frustrations at the Cannes Film Festival—not Aftab giving us the play-by-play with Lee's now infamous quip, "We wuz robbed," as punchline. ★

Notices

Noncommercial notices are listed free of charge as space permits. *The Independent* reserves the right to edit for length and makes no guarantees about duration of listing. Limit submissions to 60 words and indicate how long your information will be current. Listings must be submitted to notices@avf.org by the first of the month two months prior to cover date (e.g., Sept. 1 for Nov. issue). Remember to give us complete contact info (name, address, and phone number). Listings do not constitute an endorsement by *The Independent* or AVF. We try to be as current and accurate as possible, but nevertheless, double-check details before sending anyone anything.

By Lindsay Gelfand

COMPETITIONS

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COMPETITION: A competition designed to provide outlet for emerging talent in a relatively impenetrable industry. Finalist judges include agents, managers & other industry executives. Cats: 1/2 Hour Pre-Existing or 1/2 Hour Pilot for Sit-Com, 1-Hour Pre-Existing, 1-Hour Pilot, or Movie of the Week, or Short Screenplay, treatment, outline, written pitch, spec show bibles, reality show idea/treatment, game show idea/treatment, or Short film (must submit on VHS). Over \$3000 in cash prizes. Deadline: October 8th, 2005. Application on website: www.AmericanAccolades.com Contact: Accolades TV & Shorts, 2118 Wilshire Blvd., Ste. 160B, Santa Monica, CA 90403; info@AmericanAccolades.com.

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SCREENPLAY was established to provide a valuable outlet to recognize the quality screenplays, and stage plays of both unpublished writers and emerging writers with minor or few creative writing credits. We provide cash awards to the Top 3 writers in each of our creative writing contests since monetary awards help legitimize and validate a writer's good hard work. Please visit: www.moxie-films.com [Deadline: Sept.30, 2005]

CONFERENCES WORKSHOPS

NATIONAL ALLIANCE FOR MEDIA ARTS AND CULTURE

[NAMAC] 2005 CONFERENCE Taking Liberties:

Freedom, Creativity and Risk in the Media Arts will be held in Philadelphia, PA: Sept 28 – Oct 2, hosted by Scribe Video Center. Makers, programmers, broadcasters, activists, administrators and funders will assemble for an intensive and interactive conference about the future of independent media. Registration includes screenings, site visits and parties too! Go to www.takingliberties2005.org.

REEL VISION FILMMAKERS' CONFERENCE October 21-23, 2005, Radisson Hotel, City Center Tucson, Arizona. Linda Seger is just one of the world class screenwriting and filmmaking instructors teaching attendees how to express their unique vision on film. Registration: \$100, www.reelinspiration.org, 520-325-9175.

THE SHOWBIZ EXPO will be a focused business-to-business event catering to the working practitioner in television and film. Conference sessions cover the most pressing issues in content creation, production, post-production and distribution. ShowBiz Expo features the latest products, technologies and services for professionals in filmmaking, television, commercials, special effects, content distribution and new media. The exhibits, events and advanced educational content will focus on the evolving workflow process from production to post-production to the digital distribution of entertainment content. The event will take place at the Barker Hangar at Santa Monica Air Center. www.showbizexpo.com.

RESOURCES FUNDS

ARTISTS' FELLOWSHIPS are \$7,000 cash awards made to individual originating artists living and working in the state of New York for use in career development. Grants are awarded in 16 artistic disciplines, with applications accepted in eight categories each year. The next deadline for Artists' Fellowships is Monday, October 3, 2005. At that time we will be accepting applications in the following categories: Architecture/Environmental Structures, Choreography, Fiction, Music Composition, Painting, Photography, Playwriting, Screenwriting, and Video. To learn more about Artists' Fellowships visit our website at www.nyfa.org/afp. Applications for the remaining categories—Computer Arts, Crafts, Film, Nonfiction Literature, Performance Art/ Multidisciplinary Work, Poetry, Printmaking/Drawing/Artists' Books and Sculpture—will be accepted in early October 2006.

MEDIA ARTS TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE FUND is designed to help non-profit media arts programs in New York State stabilize, strengthen or restructure their media arts organizational capacity, services and activities. The fund will provide up to \$2,000 per project to organizations which receive support from NYSCA's Electronic Media and Film program. The Media Arts Technical Assistance fund can assist with the hiring of consultants or other activities which contribute to organizational, management and programming issues which influence the media arts activities. Contact Sherry Mille

Hocking, Program Director at Experimental Television Center deadlines for application are January 1, 2005; April 1, July 1, and October 1.

NAPT PRODUCER OPPORTUNITY FUND encourages participation in professional development activities that enhance skills in areas such as TV production, marketing, business development or involvement in Public Broadcasting-sponsored workshops. Open to individuals who have a track record of producing programs about Native American subject matter, or who have been involved in Public Broadcasting. Applications will be reviewed quarterly (received by): October 15 for activities scheduled after December 1. For additional information email: native@unl.edu.

THE FIRSTPIX program for 2005 seeks to foster the best and brightest new talent in digital video, film and animation, and to help promote that talent by providing supplemental post-production funds for selected projects. The criteria for a firstPix project are as follows: Must be the first or second feature DV or film* project of the applicant, The projected budget cannot exceed \$250,000.00, Principal photography must have completed after January 1, 2003, Production must be completed and the DV/film is in post-production, the DV/film should have a positive humanitarian message. Deadline: Sept. 15, 2005. NextPix will offer post production funding of up to 5K as a grant to the filmmaker. The grant may either be used toward finishing funds, or to fund marketing and promotion (such as a festival tour or acquisitions screening). NextPix will also publicize the selected project(s) through its own website and assist filmmakers in promoting their project. Please visit http://nextpix.com/v1_1/projects/firtpixinfo.htm to fill out an application.

THE FUND FOR WOMEN ARTISTS is a non-profit organization dedicated to helping women get the resources they need to do their creative work. We focus on women using their art to address social issues, especially women in theatre, film, and video, and we have two primary goals: To Challenge Stereotypes. To Increase Opportunities. www.WomenArts.org.

THE GLOBAL FILM INITIATIVE awards up to eight (8) grants per funding cycle. Each grant will be

in the amount of USD 10,000 with a pre-sale option for an additional sum. Grants are awarded to assist filmmakers with the production and post-production. Please visit www.globalfilm.org/gfi_guidelines.htm for details regarding application materials. Deadlines for application must be postmarked by September 15th.

THE LEEWAY FOUNDATION, which supports individual women artists, arts programs, and arts organizations in the Greater Philadelphia region, has announced the Art and Change Grants provide immediate, short-term grants of up to \$2,500 to women artists in the Philadelphia region who need financial assistance to take advantage of opportunities for art and change. The artist's opportunity for change must be supported by or be in collaboration with a Change Partner—a person, organization, or business that is providing the opportunity or is a part of the opportunity in some way. Eligible Change Partners include mentors, editors, galleries, community art spaces, theaters, non-profit organizations, film studios, and clubs. (Art and Change Grant Deadlines: April 11, June 20, and October 31, 2005.) Visit the Leeway Foundation website for grantmaking guidelines and application forms.

THE QUEENS COMMUNITY ARTS FUND provides support through a competitive process ensuring the highest quality of arts activities and services in our borough. Individual artists must live in Queens and organizations must be non-profit Queens based and have been in existence for at least one year. Please see application guidelines for other eligibility and restrictions that apply. The applications and guidelines will be available to download as of July 1, 2005 [found at www.queenscouncilarts.org. Contact the QCAF director at 718-647-3377 x 15 with any questions or concerns. Deadline Oct. 1.

WOMEN MAKE MOVIES' Fiscal Sponsorship Program enables your non-commercial media project to apply for funding which requires tax-exempt 501(c)(3) status under WMM's tax-exempt status. Fiscal sponsorship also allows you to accept tax-deductible charitable contributions from individuals. Please visit www.wmm.com/assist/fiscalsponsorship.htm for more information; Deadline: September 15.

Student Photo by
Eva Kolenko



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MICROCINEMAS SCREENINGS

FILM AND VIDEO 825 - Series of bi-monthly screenings of locally, nationally and internationally recognized film and video artists' work, providing a forum for presenting experimental film and video in Los Angeles. Film/Video 825, Gallery 825/LAAA, 825 N. La Cienega Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90069, T: (310) 652-8272, Fax: (310) 652-9251, gallery825@laaa.org, www.laaa.org/calendar/film_video.html.

ROOFTOP FILMS summer series is underway every Friday at the Automotive High School: 50 Bedford Ave [at Lorimer, in Williamsburg Brooklyn] and Saturdays [through July 16th] on the roof of the Old American Can Factory at 232 3rd St. [Gowanus/Park Slope]. Special Shows Monday July 4 and Thursday August 4. For information, please visit www.rooftopfilms.com or email Dan Nuxoll, programming director, at submit@rooftopfilms.com.

SQUEAKY WHEEL's long-running free open screening is one of our most popular programs: second Wednesday of Every Month

8pm! Free! Filmmakers, video/sound/digital artists, community documentarians, and students of all ages are welcome to bring short works for insightful critique. The open screening is perfect for newly created works or works in progress. Bring works less than 15 minutes. Call ahead to screen a longer work. We created some new mini-themes (you don't have to make work on the theme, but if it inspires you, go ahead) to get more people in the door! Formats accepted: Super 8, 16mm, video (mini-dv, svhs, vhs), cassettes, cds, Mac compatible cd-rom. Please visit www.squeaky.org/opportunities.html#ongoing for more information.

BROADCAST CABLECAST

AXLEGREASE PUBLIC ACCESS CABLE SHOW: Tuesdays at 2:PM on Channel 20 Become part of current media making history and submit your media work to be shown on TV, on our legendary public access cable show. Commercial free, 100% media art TV. Provide us with mini-dv, vhs, svhs, or 8mm video (ntsc) tapes with a running time of 28 min. or less. Your work may also be displayed in our storefront window. Your entry

will become a part of our Member Viewing Library unless you include an SASE. Axlegrease is open to local and international artists. Send tapes Attention: Axlegrease. Formats accepted: mini-dv, s-vhs, vhs or dvd. Please visit www.squeaky.org/opportunities.html#ongoing for more information.

THE DOCUMENTARY CHANNEL is a new digital cable channel dedicated to airing, exclusively, the works of the independent documentary filmmaker. They are not afraid of controversy. That said, they prefer the edgier, more personal films that tell a story and that show something in a unique, visual manner. Submissions accepted on a rolling basis. Please visit <http://documentarychannel.com/index.htm> or email programs@documentarychannel.com

WEBCAST

FILMFIGHTS.COM democratic filmfestival that anyone can enter, 3 times a month. We film-fight every ten days (the 10th, 20th, and 30th) and submissions are due 1 day before the fight—given a title or genre, the submissions are voted on through the website. The winner goes into the archives, and their video sits front

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and center until the next winner is crowned, along with a little blurb about whatever they feel like. <http://filmfights.com/submit.shtml>.

KNOWITALLVIDEO created an online video community aimed at world's largest user-generated video collection. With an exhaustive list of categories covering every conceivable subject, any wannabe star or director with a camera can easily upload short-form digital videos for an unlimited audience of Internet and wireless PDA users who search the site by key word or category, all completely free of charge—equal parts talent showcase and information resource. For more information please visit www.knowitallvideo.com.

WWW.VIDEOART.NET is looking for new filmmakers, video artists, producers, etc. to post their clips into a searchable database. Registration is free. We're also interested in learning about your work, new links, trends, equipment, and general film dialogue in the forums. A great opportunity to showcase your talents and discuss your work in the forums.



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Work Wanted

By Lindsay Gelfand

Noncommercial notices are listed free of charge as space permits. *The Independent* reserves the right to edit for length and makes no guarantees about duration of listing. Limit submissions to 60 words and indicate how long your information will be current. Listings must be submitted to notices@aifv.org by the first of the month two months prior to cover date (e.g., Sept. 1 for Nov. issue). Remember to give us complete contact info (name, address, and phone number). Listings do not constitute an endorsement by *The Independent* or AIFV. We try to be as current and accurate as possible, but nevertheless, double-check details before sending anyone anything.

FIRST SUNDAYS COMEDY FILM FESTIVAL

Deadline: ongoing. A monthly festival featuring the best in comedy and short film/digi/animation followed by an after-screening networking event. An ongoing festival held the first Sunday of each month at the Pioneer Theater in New York, First Sundays is the premiere opportunity to showcase work and meet talented directors and other indie dv/film folk. Cats: short (under 20 min.), comedy, animation/dv/film. Formats: Mini-DV, DVD, VHS. Entry Fee: \$20. Contact: (email) film@chicagocitylimits.com or (website) www.firstsundays.com.

INDEPENDENT LENS, the national PBS series showcases independent documentary programming and dramas. They are currently seeking submissions of completed films for consideration for broadcast. www.pbs.org/independentlens/submissions.html Deadline: September 10.

MACHINE DREAMS is developing a series of theatrical shows for national audiences that will involve original music, movies, movie shorts, animations, games, graphics and art. We are conducting a global search for the best ORIGINAL independent material in the following categories: Social Commentary & Societal Issues, Humor and Satire, Special Effects, Interactive "No Death" Gaming, Great Media in any form (music, music video, movie, movie shorts, animation, games, graphics, art) We plan to incorporate your

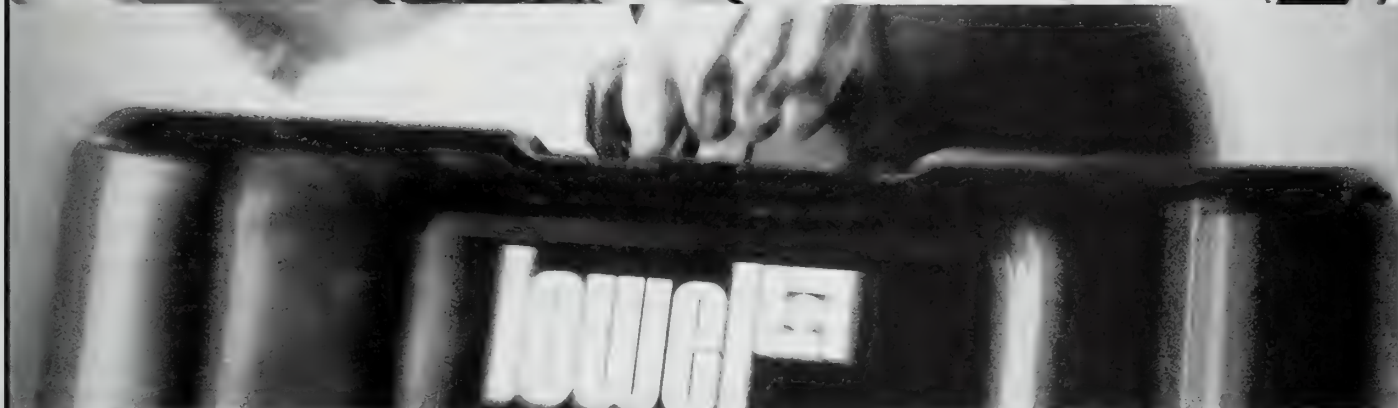
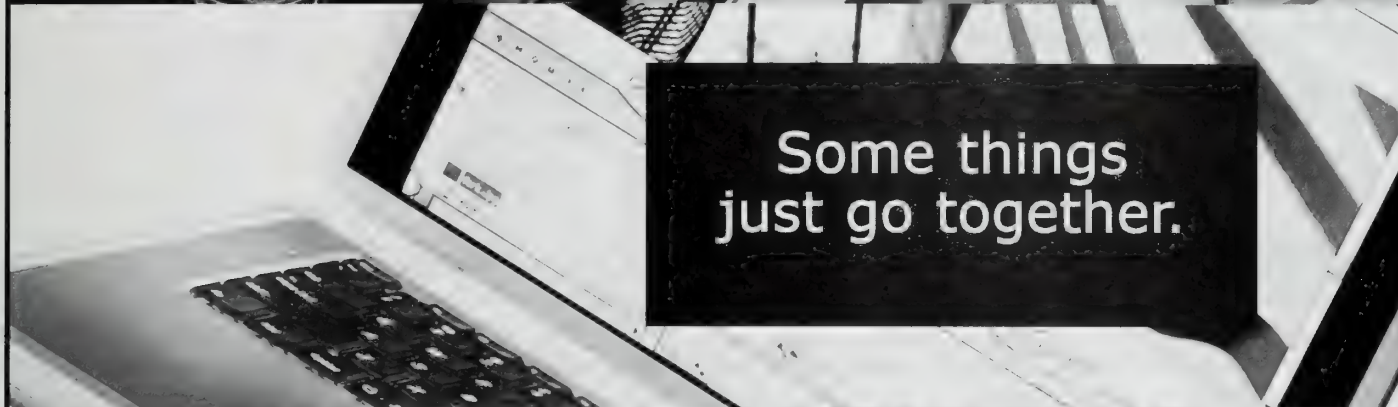
work in one or more of the following ways: 1. Include it in a juried show in New York City, with winners receiving recognition and cash prizes and airing on a network television show, 2. Include it in one or more interactive shows in New York City, 3. Include it in distribution across movie theatres, DVD, web, television, cable, satellite or radio broadcast. Email a BRIEF DESCRIPTION to us of your work: kate@machinedreams.com DO NOT SEND US YOUR WORK YET. For more information call Kate Lawson at 612-371-4428 x11.

SHORT CUTS is now accepting submissions for their monthly screenings. No submission fee—Short Cuts is dedicated to providing filmmakers with an intimate setting to both screen their work and network with others in the film community. Short Cuts encourages submissions from first-time directors, students and professionals living any where in the world. All genres are welcome. No Deadline - Round the year Submissions. To submit, please visit our website www.shortcuts.in.

THE NEW HAMPSHIRE FILM EXPO (NHFX) is currently accepting film and video submissions of all lengths and genres for the fifth annual NHFX which will be held October 14-16 in scenic Portsmouth, NH. Awards will be presented in several categories including Best of Fest. NHFX is also accepting screenplay submissions as well. Please visit www.nhfx.com for additional information.

THE PIONEER THEATER—NYC's showcase of independent cinema. Always on the lookout for new movies to screen. To submit for a public screening, check out: www.twoboots.com/pioneer/submit.htm.

TWISTEDSPINE.COM has announced a Call for Entries for their second annual Micro Film Fest. The fest is looking for shorts, features, and screenplays. All projects must have been produced for under \$10,000. This year's fest will include workshops by Microcinemascope's own Peter John Ross, Robert Banks, Bill Johns, Johnny Wu, and others. The film festival will be held September 23-25 in Cleveland, Ohio. More information can be found at www.twistedspine.com.




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Festivals

By Bo Mehrad

Listings do not constitute an endorsement. We recommend that you contact the festival directly before sending cast-lists, as details may change after the magazine goes to press. Deadline 1st of the month two months prior to cover date (e.g., Sept. 1st for Nov. issue). Include festival dates, categories, prizes, entry fees, deadlines, formats & contact info. Send to: festivals@aivf.org.

DOMESTIC

ABSOLUTE TIME FILM FESTIVAL, March, CA. Deadline: Oct. 31, Nov. 15 (final). Festival focus is (but not limited to) films written, produced and/or directed by under-represented communities. Mission of fest is to present films that explore cross-cultural communication. Films must have been produced in the past 12 months. Cats: feature, short, animation, doc. Awards: \$200 jury award for best film. Formats: 1/2", DVD, Mini-DV. Preview on VHS/DVD. Entry Fee: \$20; \$35 (final). Contact: San Francisco Stage & Film; (415)401-9768; sfstagefilm@yahoo.com; www.sfstagefilm.org.

ANCHORAGE INT'L FILM FESTIVAL, Dec. 2-11, AK. Deadline: Sept. 30. The goal of AFF is to support & promote independent film & video artists & establish a dynamic showcase of the world's best independent films. Cats: feature, short, doc, animation. Awards: Cash Awards. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, Beta SP, DV, S-VHS, 1/2". Preview on VHS or DVD. Entry Fee: \$25 (shorts); \$40 (features). Contact: Anchorage Cultural Council; (907) 338-3690; fax: 338-3857; filmsak@alaska.net; www.anchoragefilmfestival.com.

ANN ARBOR FILM FESTIVAL, Mar. 21-26, MI. Deadline: Sept. 1, Nov. 1, Dec. 1 (final). Fest welcomes all cats & genres of independent filmmaking. Founded: 1963. Cats: any style or genre, feature, doc, short, animation, experimental. Awards: \$18,000 in cash prizes awarded. Formats: 16mm, 35mm, DVD, Beta SP. Preview on VHS, DVD or 16mm. Entry Fee: \$30; \$35; \$40

(final). Contact: Festival; (734) 995-5356; fax: 995-5396; info@aafilmfest.org; www.aafilmfest.org.

ASBURY SHORTS OF NEW YORK, November 8, 18, 19, NY. Deadline: Sept. 30. Fest combines screenings of award winning shorts, under 20 min. in length, w/ live music & unannounced live stage surprises. Organizers also invite members of the advertising & television broadcast industries seeking new commercial directors. Founded: 1980. Cats: short, any style or genre. Formats: 35mm, Beta SP. Preview on VHS or DVD. Entry Fee: \$15. Contact: Sean Titone, New Films Coordinator; (718) 832-7848; aff1@earthlink.net; www.asburyshortsnyc.com.

ATLANTA JEWISH FILM FESTIVAL, Jan. 23-29, GA. Deadline: Sept. 23. Fest is a 7-day cinematic examination of Jewish life, culture & history. Screenings are supplemented by guest speakers, providing a dynamic forum for audience dialogue w/ filmmakers & expert panelists. Cats: feature, short, doc, animation, experimental. Formats: 16mm, 35mm, Beta, Beta SP, DigiBeta, DVD. VHS or DVD. Entry Fee: \$35. Contact: Festival; (404) 949-0658; info@atlantajewishfilm.org; atlantajewishfilm.org.

BIG SKY DOC FILM FESTIVAL, Feb. 16-22, MT. Deadline: Sept. 1, Nov. 1 (final). Held at the restored Wilma Theater in downtown Missoula, Montana. The competitive event is open to non-fiction films & videos of all styles, genres, & lengths. Official selections w/ production dates prior to January 1 of previous yr. are eligible for

entry but will screen out of competition. Cats: doc. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, DVD, Beta SP, Mini-DV, DVCam. preview on VHS or DVD. Entry Fee: \$20 (shorts); \$30 (features). Contact: Doug Hawes-Davis; (406) 728-0753; bigsky@highplainsfilms.org; www.bigskyfilmfest.org.

CHLOTRUDIS SOCIETY FOR INDEPENDENT FILM SHORT FILM FESTIVAL, Oct. 3, MA. Deadline: Aug. 15; Sept. 1 (final). Compete in the Short Film category of Boston's own Chlotrudis Awards, given by CSIF, a non-profit organization that honors & supports independent film. Cats: short, any style or genre. Awards: Best narrative short; Best doc short. Formats: DVD, 35mm, 16mm, Beta SP, 1/2". preview on VHS or DVD. Entry Fee: \$15; \$25 (final). Contact: CASFF; (781) 526-5384; fax: (617) 424-8617; filmfestival@chlotrudis.org; www.chlotrudis.org.

COATSVILLE FILM FESTIVAL, Sept. 16-18, PA. Deadline: Sept. 5. Cats: feature, short, doc, animation, TV. Formats: DVD, 1/2". Preview on VHS or DVD. Entry Fee: \$25.00; \$10.00 (Student). Contact: c/o LumenEssence; (610) 384-2535; cthreea@brandywine.net; www.Coatesvillefilmfest.info.

DANCE ON CAMERA FESTIVAL, Jan. 4-7; 13-14, NY. Deadline: Sept. 15. This touring fest is the oldest annual int'l dance film/video event in the world. Co-sponsored by Film Society of Lincoln Center, fest incl. photo exhibits, workshops & panels. Founded: 1972. Cats: Experimental, Feature, Short, doc, animation. Formats: 35mm, Beta SP,

Mini-DV, DVD. Preview on VHS. Entry Fee: \$35. Contact: Dance Films Association, Inc.; (212)727-0764; fax: 727-0764; dfa5@earthlink.net; www.dancefilmsassn.org.

MIAMI INT'L FILM FESTIVAL, March 3-12, FL. Deadline: Aug. 19; Sept. 23. Festival is dedicated to bringing the best of world cinema to South Florida. The fest has used the unique geographical & cultural position of Miami to make the fest a premiere venue for the exhibition of Int'l & US features w/ a special focus on Iberoamerican cinema. Entries should not be in theatrical release in US or Europe & must be a Florida Premiere. Cats: Feature, Doc, Short. Awards: Jury Prizes, Audience Awards. Formats: 35mm, HD Video. Preview on VHS. Entry Fee: \$15, \$20 (shorts); \$30, \$40 (features). Contact: c/o Miami Dade College; (305) 237-3456; info@miamifilmfestival.com; www.miamifilmfestival.com.

MOBIUS ADVERTISING AWARDS, February, IL. Deadline: Oct. 1. Open to TV, cinema, in-flight, cable & radio commercials, print & package design produced, screened or aired nat'lly/regionally/locally after Oct 1 of previous year. Newly produced ads as well as previously produced, still appearing or reintroduced also eligible. Cats: automotive, children's products, clothing, commercial products, food & beverages, home care & maintenance products, home furnishings, personal products, personal articles & gift items, pet products, pharmaceutical, recreation, services, misc. Technique/specialty cats: animation (computer, non-computer), copywriting, direction, art direction, editing, humor, illustration, music (adaptation, original), overall production, photo, product demo, set design, special effects, talent. Founded: 1971. Cats: TV, Advertising, Animation. Awards: Mobius Statuette & Certificate. Formats: 3/4", 1/2", Beta, DVD, CD-ROM. Preview on VHS. Entry Fee: \$195 (single); \$295-\$530 (campaign). Contact: Lee W. Gluckman, Jr.; (310) 540-0959; fax: 316-8905; mobiusinfo@mobiusawards.com; www.mobiusawards.com.

NEW YORK CINEMA MARKET, Dec. 9-11, NY. Deadline: Sept. 30. Film market "catering to the true independent filmmaker." Twenty minute segments from 48 films over 3 days together w/ 6 seminars. Cats: feature, doc, feature length works only. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, Beta SP. Preview on VHS or DVD.

Entry Fee: \$35; Exhibition Fee: \$165 if accepted. Contact: Festival; (201) 251-9722; pchau64@cs.com; www.newyorkcinemamarket.com.

NEW YORK CITY HORROR FILM FESTIVAL, Oct. 1-10, NY. Deadline: Sept. 1; Sept. 15 (final). Festival focusing solely on Horror & Sci-Fi. Fest's philosophy is that "the independent horror film is as important as any genre. In fact, many great Hollywood directors started out making low budget horror films. We feel that the horror film may just be more important for the future of film making than any other genre out there!" Works in progress accepted. Cats: feature, short, doc. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, Beta SP, NTSC, VHS, Mini-DV. Preview on VHS or DVD. Entry Fee: Features: \$40, \$50 (final); Shorts: \$25, \$35 (final). Contact: Entry Coordinator; (201) 666-6729; NYCHorrorFest@aol.com; www.nychorrorfest.com.

NEW YORK FESTIVALS INTERNATIONAL FILM & VIDEO AWARDS, Jan. 28, NY. Deadline: Sept. 16. Annual int'l awards recognizing "The World's Best Work" in infoal, educational & industrial film productions & corporate video. The competition has attracted entries from producers, directors, distributors & corporations in 43 countries in previous years. Founded: 1957. Cats: doc, short, industrials, PR, feature. Formats: 3/4", 1/2". Preview on VHS. Entry Fee: \$175-\$375. Contact: Festival; (212) 643-4800; fax: 643-0170; info@newyorkfestivals.com; www.newyorkfestivals.com.

NEW YORK INT'L CHILDREN'S FILM FESTIVAL, March 3-19, NY. Deadline: Oct. 15. Competitive fest screens 75 new works, shorts & features, screen to an est. audience of 20,000 children ages 3-18, parents, filmmakers & media execs. All films must have been produced after Jan. 1 of previous year. Founded: 1997. Cats: feature, doc, short, animation, experimental, music video, student, youth media, family, children. Formats: 35mm, Beta SP, DVD. Preview on VHS or DVD. Entry Fee: \$75 (feature, 45 min. or longer); \$50 (short, under 45 min.); \$25 (student). Contact: Emily Shapiro; (212) 349-0330; fax: 966-5923; info@gkids.com; www.gkids.com.

NIHILIST INT'L FILM FESTIVAL, Dec. 3, CA. Deadline: Sept. 15. Fest seeks works "that



kansas city filmmakers jubilee

The Kansas City Filmmakers Jubilee Film Festival seeks US and International short films (under 30 minutes) for its 10th annual celebration of independent filmmaking, April 7 - 13, 2006.

Entry deadlines and fees:

- October 1, 2005,
\$25 USD/entry
- November 1, 2005,
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- December 1, 2005,
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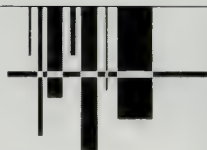
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has appalled & offended other film fests". Formats: Mini-DV, 16mm. Preview on VHS or DVD. Contact: Festival; Nihilist01@aol.com; www.nihilists.net/film.html.

ORLANDO INT'L FILM FESTIVAL, Nov. 4-6, FL. Deadline: Oct. 8. This fest showcases the most exciting, creative, & cutting-edge features, shorts, animations, commercials & videos from around the world. Cats: feature, short, animation, music video, commercial, interactive media, doc, experimental, student, any style or genre. Preview on VHS. Entry Fee: Features: \$50; Shorts (Under 40 min.): \$35; Student fee: \$25. Contact: OIFF; (407) 894-7842; info@orlandofilmfestival.com; www.orlandofilmfestival.com.

PALM SPRINGS INT'L FILM FESTIVAL, Jan. 5-16, CA. Deadline: Sept. 23; Oct. 14 (final). This Festival is one of the largest film fests in the country, screening over 200 films from more than 60 countries to an audience of over 100,000 each January, w/ a Black Tie Gala centrepiece event that honours the most celebrated talents in classic & contemporary cinema. Founded: 1990. Cats: feature, doc. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, Beta SP, DigiBeta, DVcam, HDcam. Preview on VHS or DVD. Entry Fee: \$50; \$75 (final). Contact: Darryl Macdonald; (760) 322-2930; fax: 322-4087; programming@psfilmfest.org; www.psfilmfest.org.

SAN FRANCISCO INT'L ASIAN AMERICAN FILM FESTIVAL, March 16-26, CA. Deadline: Sept. 9; Oct. 7 (final). Fest is the largest & most prominent showcase for works from Asian America & Asia w/ 130 works shown. Fest is a "lively venue for filmmakers, industry & Asian communities" worldwide. Extensive local coverage by media, industry press. Also special events, panels, installations, galas. Fest sponsored by Nat'l Asian American Telecommunications Assoc. Founded: 1982. Cats: Feature, Experimental, Short, Animation, Doc, Mixed genre, music video, youth media, family, installation. Formats: Beta SP, 35mm, 16mm. Preview on VHS or DVD. Entry Fee: \$25; \$35 (final). Contact: Chi-hui Yang, Exhibition Dir.; (415) 863-0814; fax: (415) 863-7428; festival@naatanet.org; www.naatanet.org/festival.

SLAMDANCE FILM FESTIVAL, January 19-27, UT. Deadline: shorts: Aug. 29; Oct. 11 (final); features: Aug. 29; Oct. 17 (final). Started by 3 filmmakers in 1995, fest's primary objective is to present new indie films by new filmmakers. Fest runs concurrent w/ Sundance Film Festival & takes place in the

Magnolia Independent Film Festival

Feb. 16, 17, & 18, 2006 - Starkville, MS

Our 9th annual "Mag" welcomes all genres, all lengths, in competition for awards. The "Mag" was founded by Ron Tibbett to celebrate his vision of Independent film in Mississippi. It has been called the most filmmaker friendly festival by many of our past contributors. Entry fees are \$25 feature, \$15 shorts and \$10 student film. We are proud partners with Rhode Island International Film Festival, Tupelo Film Festival, Crossroads Film Festival and Indie Memphis.



Congrats to all 2005 Mag winners including Aruna Naimji's "One Balloon", E.S. Wochensky's "Shoot the Moon", Joe Scott's "Ocean Front Property" and Joel Fendelman's "Tuesday".

We look forward to seeing you down in the deep South.

Entry Forms: Download at www.magfilmfest.com

or write to: Festival Director

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heart of Park City, Utah. Films showcased attract industry interest & several have received distrib. & agency rep. Founded: 1995. Cats: Short, Doc, Feature, Animation, Experimental, Any style or genre. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, 3/4", 1/2", Beta SP, DVD, Web. Preview on VHS. Entry Fee: \$25-\$60. Contact: Slamdance; (323) 466-1786; fax: (323) 466-1784; mail@slamdance.com; www.slamdance.com.

SPOKANE GLTB FILM FESTIVAL, Nov. 4-5, WA. Deadline: Sept. 10. This fest aims to revel in the cinema that paints the GLTB community in an authentic light. Cats: feature, doc, short, animation, experimental. Awards: Audience Award. Preview on VHS or DVD. Entry Fee: None. Contact: Spokane Film Festival; (509) 216-0366; spokanefilmfest@hotmail.com; www.spokanefilmfest.org.

SUNDANCE FILM FESTIVAL, Jan. 20-30, UT. Deadline: Aug. 19 (features/shorts); Sept. 2 (Final: shorts); Sept. 16 (Final: features). Founded in 1985 to "recognize independent filmmaking in all of its diversity," Sundance is the premiere U.S. competitive showcase for new indie films. Showcase for domestic & int'l films, incl. competition of new American ind. feature films, non-competitive program of both new American ind. & foreign feature films & shorts. Dramatic & doc entries for the Independent Feature Film Competition must have 50% U.S. financing & be completed no earlier than Oct. of previous year. For competition, entries must be world premieres. Foreign feature & documentary films (less than 50% U.S. financed) are eligible for the World Cinema Competition. Submitted films must be subtitled in English & a U.S. premiere. About 135 feature-length & 90 short films are selected for each fest & large audience of over 36,000 incl. major distributors, programmers, journalists, critics & agents. Int'l press coverage extensive. Founded: 1985. Cats: Feature, Short, Doc. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, DV, Video. Preview on VHS. Entry Fee: \$25/\$35 (shorts); \$35/\$50 (features). Contact: Geoffrey Gilmore/John Cooper; (310) 360-1981; fax: 360-1969; program ming@sundance.org; www.sundance.org.

WILD & SCENIC ENVIRONMENTAL FILM FESTIVAL, Jan. 13-15, CA. Deadline: Oct. 14. Taking place in the Sierra mountains, fest promises award-winning environmental & adventure films, speakers, activists, celebrities, & parties. Founded: 2002. Cats: feature, doc, short, animation, experimen-

tal, any style or genre. Formats: DVD, Beta SP. Preview on VHS, DVD. Entry Fee: \$35. Contact: Kathy Dotson; (530) 265-5961 x202; fax: 265-6232; kathy@syrcl.org; www.wildandscenicfilmfestival.org.

WINGSPAN FILM FESTIVAL, March 3-5, AZ. Deadline: Sept. 15; Oct. 15 (final). Formerly the Tucson Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender Film Festival, fest presents films that focus on the diversity of experience of gay, lesbian, bisexual & transgender people & that present new perspectives on issues concerning the LGBT community. Cats: feature, doc, animation, experimental, short. Formats: 35mm, Beta, Mini-DV, DVD. Preview on VHS or DVD. Entry Fee: \$10; \$15 (final). Contact: Elizabeth Burden; (520) 624-1779; filmfest@wingspan.org; www.wingspan.org/filmfest.

WOMEN IN THE DIRECTORS CHAIR INT'L FILM & VIDEO FESTIVAL, March 12-21, IL. Deadline: Sept. 1, Oct. 1 (final). Annual fest is the largest & longest running women's film/video fest in U.S. Previous fests have included over 120 outstanding works from women directors around the world, int'l guest artists, diverse programming from an inter-generational queer women's video workshop to a hip-hop extravaganza. Some works may be included in year-long nat'l tour. Participants in tour receive stipend based on number of screenings. Founded: 1979. Cats: any style or genre, installation, children, family, TV, youth media, student, music video, experimental, animation, feature, doc, short. Formats: 3/4", 16mm, 35mm, Beta, 1/2", Beta SP, U-matic. Preview on VHS. Entry Fee: \$20 (early, WIDC members); \$30 (final). Contact: Festival; (773) 907-0610; fax: (773) 907-0381; widc@widc.org; www.widc.org.

WOMEN OF COLOR FILM FESTIVAL, March 3-6, CA. Deadline: Oct. 1; Nov. 1 (final). Fest aims to provide a progressive showcase of films created by an underrepresented sector of the film industry. First consideration is given to those films or videos directed by minority women. Second priority for films/videos w/ women of color in key creative positions other than director, e.g. producer, screenwriter, etc. Cats: feature, doc, short. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, Beta, Mini-DV, DV. Preview on VHS. Entry Fee: None; \$10 (final). Contact: c/o Pacific Film Archives; (510) 642-1412; wocfilmproject@berkeley.edu; www.bampfa.berkeley.edu/pfa_programs/women_of_color/.

INTERNATIONAL

ALTER-NATIVE: INT'L SHORT FILM FESTIVAL, Nov. 2-6, Romania. Deadline: Sept. 10. This fest aims to revel in the art of the short film, & promote its existence through this four day fest. Works must have been completed by Jan. of previous year. Cats: short (not exceeding 30 mins), experimental, animation, TV (reporting, publicity), fiction, nonfiction. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, Beta SP, S-VHS, DVD, DV, (only in PAL formats). Preview on VHS or DVD. Entry Fee: None. Contact: U.D.T.M.-MADISZ; 011 40 265 267 547; fax: 268 573; festival@rdslink.ro; www.madisz.ro.

ASIAN FILM FESTIVAL, Nov. 8-13, France. Deadline: Sept. 26. The New Asian Cinema selection is dedicated to emerging filmmakers from whole Asia. Cats: Must be "Asian", animation, experimental, short, feature, any style or genre. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, Beta SP, VHS, DV. Preview on VHS (PAL, Secam, NTSC). Entry Fee: None. Contact: Festival; 011-33(0)4-72-91-43-73; fax: 4-72-35-90-11; asiexpo@asiexpo.com; www.asiexpo.com.

AUTRANS INT'L MOUNTAIN & ADVENTURE FILM FESTIVAL, Dec. 1-5, France. Deadline: Sept. 30. Competitive fest, open to professional & non-pro filmmakers, looks for films that "contribute positively to knowledge on the one hand of the snow & ice world & the other to developing & exalting human resources in adventure & evasion." Entries may incl. snow & ice films, sporting & sports teaching films, social life & ethnology films, etc. Entries should have been completed in previous 4 yrs. Founded: 1985. Cats: any work concerning "mountain & adventure". Formats: 35mm, 16mm, 3/4", Beta SP, DigiBeta, 1/2", all non NTSC video. VHS. Entry Fee: None. Contact: Secretariat General du Festival Int'l du Film d'Autrans; (33) 47 695 3070; fax: (33) 04 7695 7093; info@festival-autrans.com; www.festivalautrans.com.

BILBAO INT'L FESTIVAL OF DOC & SHORT FILMS, Nov. 29-Dec. 4, Spain. Deadline: Sept. 1. Cats: short (no longer than 45 min.), doc, animation, experimental. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, Beta SP, DV. Preview on VHS. Entry Fee: None. Contact: Colón de Larreátegui; 011 (34)94-424-86-98; fax: (34) 94-424-56-24; info@zinebi.com; www.zinebi.com.

BRUSSELS INT'L FESTIVAL OF INDEPENDENT FILM & VIDEO, Nov. 1-6, Belgium. Deadline: Sept. 10.

Festival is a "global meeting of audiovisual creation in the face of the dominant cinema but not against it." Includes a special category for works by & about deaf people that focus on the topic "the future of the deaf in our society." Cats: feature, doc, animation, experimental, any style or genre, short. Formats: 35mm, Beta SP, Mini-DV, VHS. Contact: Centre Multimédia; 011 32 2 649 3340; fax: same; info@centre.multimedia.org; www.centremultimedia.org.

GIJON INT'L FILM FESTIVAL FOR YOUNG PEOPLE, Nov. 24- Dec. 2, Spain. Deadline: Sept. 23. Member of FIAPF & European Coordination of Film Festivals. Festival aims to present the newest tendencies of young cinema worldwide. Films shown are daring, innovative & young in every sense. Official Section is competitive for long & short films produced after Jan. 1st of preceding yr. & has non-comp element too; Information Section incl. cycles, retros & tributes. Also special screenings & other film-related events. Founded: 1962. Cats: Feature, Short, Children. Formats: 35mm, 16mm. Preview on VHS or DVD. Entry Fee: None. Contact: Jose Luis Cienfuegos, Festival Director; 011 34 98 518 2940; fax: 34 98 518 2944; festivalgijon@telecable.es; www.gijonfilmfestival.com.

GOLDENEYE FILM FESTIVAL, Dec. 7-12, Jamaica. Deadline: Oct. 1. Fest takes place in Oracabessa Bay, Jamaica at the former home of Ian Fleming. All films are screened on DVD format in the villa & at outdoor screenings on the beach. Cats: feature, doc, short, works in progress. Formats: DVD. Preview on DVD. Entry Fee: \$35. Contact: David Koh; (212) 320-3678; fax: (212) 266-6247; david.koh@palmpictures.com; www.goldeneyefilmfestival.com.

HOF INT'L FILM FESTIVAL, October 26-30, Germany. Deadline: September 10. Few long weekend film fests command the prestige & faithful audience support that Hof has. This is a linchpin in the trio of German fests (w/ Berlin & Munich). skedded conveniently every four month to bring the buffs, pros & insiders together for regular parleys on the state of the German film industry. Cats: feature, doc, short, any style or genre. Formats: 35mm, DigiBeta. Preview on VHS (PAL or NTSC) or DVD. Entry Fee: None. Contact: Festival; 011 49-89-129 74 22 ; fax: 011 49-89 -123 68 68; info@hoferfilmtage.de; www.hoferfilmtage.de.

MILAN INT'L FILM FESTIVAL, March 10-20, Italy. Deadline: September 30, January 31 (final). MIFF was founded to encourage & support the work of independent & experimental filmmakers & provide a world-class int'l platform to showcase their films. Founded: 2000. Cats: feature, short. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, Video. Preview on VHS. Entry Fee: Features: \$50 (early), \$90 (final); Shorts: \$30 (early), \$50 (final). Contact: MIFF, or FFIM; 011 39 02 8918 1179; info@miff.it; www.miff.it.

NAMUR INTERNATIONAL SHORT FILM FESTIVAL, November 17-20, Belgium. Deadline: September 10. All-short fest accepts films 30 min. & under, directed or produced by the French community in Belgium. Cats: short, doc, animation. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, Beta SP, DigiBeta, DVcam, HDcam. Preview on VHS or DVD. Entry Fee: None. Contact: Media 10/10; 011 32 81 654 770; fax: 011 32 81 22 17 79; media10-10@province.namur.be; www.media10-10.be.

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Competitive section selects 10 narrative features, 10 feature docs & 30 shorts. All films shown 3 times.

Films must be directed or co-directed by women; completed since November, 2004; not theatrically released in France, broadcast on French TV or shown at other French fests. Student productions are considered.

All subjects, genres & styles considered.
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Fest pays for filmmakers accomodation (3 days) & round-trip shipping for films selected.
Awards: Total of 10 prizes (up to 25.000 \$), incl. cash, equipment & facilities access, & a script development fund.

Contact: Jackie Buet, AFIFF
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Place Salvador Allende
94000 Creteil, France
tel. 00 33 1 49 80 38 98
fax: 00 33 1 43 99 04 10
iris@filmsdefemmes.com
www.filmsdefemmes.com

PREMIERS PLANS D'ANGERS, Jan. 20-29, France. Deadline: Oct. 15. This fest aims to promote European productions in their ten day fest. Cats: feature (1st or 2nd), short (1st only), student. Formats: 35mm, 16mm. Preview on VHS or DVD. Entry Fee: None. Contact: Festival; 011 33 (1) 4271 5370; fax: 4271 0111; paris@premiersplans.org; www.premiersplans.org.

ROTTERDAM INT'L FILM FESTIVAL, Jan. 25-Feb. 5, Netherlands. Deadline: October 1 (Shorts & Docs); November 1 (Features). Largest fest in Benelux w/ reputation for programming innovative, experimental new works alongside more commercial prods. 100+ features have world, int'l or European premieres; 350,000 attendances in previous years. Fest on par w/ Berlin & Sundance; describes itself as "having eye for uncompromising individualism & political & social aspects of film." Fest also hosts Cinemart (deadline Oct. 1), important co-prod. market & meeting place for producers, distributors & financiers; about 40 film projects represented. Additionally, Hubert Bals Foundation offers financial support (deadlines Aug. 1 & Mar. 1) in cats of script & project development, prod. & postprod. funding & distribution & sales. Cats: Doc, Experimental, Feature, Short, animation, installation. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, Beta SP, DigiBeta, CD-ROM. Preview on DVD or VHS. Entry Fee: None. Contact: Programme Dept.; (011) 31 10 890 9090; fax: 890 9091; programme@filmfestivalrotterdam.com; www.filmfestivalrotterdam.com.

TORELLO MOUNTAIN FILM FESTIVAL, Nov. 11-20, Spain. Deadline: Sept. 20. Torelló's fest themes incl. all aspects of mountains: mountaineering (alpinism, climbing, expeditions, excursions), mountain sports (speleology, ski, sports climbing, parachuting, canoeing-rafting, adventure), mountain environment (nature protection, flora, fauna, ethnology). Entries must have been produced in previous 3 yrs. Cats: doc, short, feature. Formats: Beta, 16mm, 35mm. Preview on VHS. Entry Fee: None. Contact: Joan Salarich, Festival Director; 011 34 93 850 43 21; fax: 850 43 21; info@torellomountainfilm.com; www.torellomountainfilm.com.

TORINO FILM FESTIVAL, Nov. 11-19, Italy. Deadline: Aug. 26(shorts); Sept. 23(features). The long running Fest is a competitive show-

case for new directors & filmmaking trends w/ the goal of helping discover, support & promote new directors & emerging areas in film. Sections incl. Int'l Competition for feature & shorts films (35mm & 16mm, Italian premieres completed after Oct. 1 of previous year); non-competitive section (features, shorts & docs). About 350 films screened. Founded: 1982. Cats: feature, doc, short. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, Beta SP, 1/2", Digital formats. Preview on VHS or DVD. Entry Fee: None. Contact: TFF; 39 011 562 3309; fax: 562 9796; luca.andreotti@torinofilmfest.org; www.torinofilmfest.org.

TRIESTE FILM FESTIVAL, Jan. 19-26, Italy. Deadline: Oct. 31. This is the leading fest of Central & Eastern European Cinema in Italy. An official member of the European Coordination of Film Festivals, it is incl. an overview of the best films, special events & monographic reviews from Central-Eastern Europe. Founded: 1989. Cats: feature, doc, short. Awards: Cash prizes for best Feature, Short, & Doc. Preview on VHS or DVD. Entry Fee: None. Contact: Annamaria Percavassi; 011 39 040 31 11 53; fax: 311 993; info@alpeadriacinema.it; www.alpeadriacinema.it.

VICTORIA INDEPENDENT FILM & VIDEO FESTIVAL, Jan. 27-Feb. 5, Canada. Deadline: Sept.1; Oct. 1; Oct. 15 (final). The fest offers high quality films, activities & events, encourages artistic innovation & creativity, provides access for a broad audience segment & is committed to cooperation & collaboration w/ other arts organizations as well as the business community. Founded: 1995. Cats: any style or genre, feature, doc, experimental, short, animation. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, Beta SP, 1/2", DV, DVD. Entry Fee: \$10; \$20 (final). Contact: Donovan Aikman, Festival Programmer; (250) 389-0444; fax: 389-0406; festival@vifvf.com; www.vifvf.com.

WHISTLER FILM FESTIVAL, Dec. 1-4, Canada. Deadline: Aug. 19 (shorts); Sept. 23 (features). Held at the British Columbia Mountain Resort seeking all subject matters. Cats: feature, short, doc, animation. Awards: Noncash awards. Formats: 35mm, DV, VHS or DVD. Entry Fee: \$25-\$50. Contact: Festival; (604) 938-3209; program@whistlerfilmfestival.com; whistlerfilmfestival.com.

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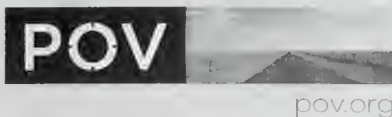
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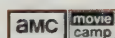
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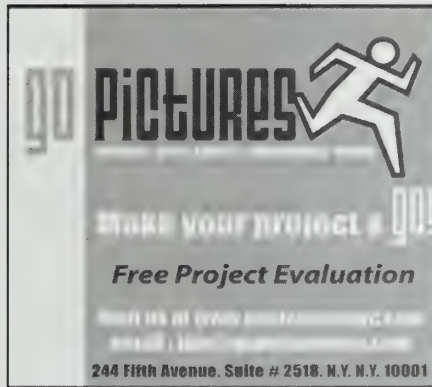
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THE LIST

money grubbers

By Lindsay Gelfand

How far have you gone to finance your film?

"I once financed a soundtrack for a short animated film by selling off all of my tribal belly-dance clothes. I held the sale in my studio with a group of girlfriends who were also dancers. I made elegant email and snail mail flyers for the sale and sent them to lots of dancers. Everything sold like hotcakes. I was astounded by how much money we made in four hours."

—Joanna Priestley, director/producer, *Dew Line* (2005)

"We used to have a 'donate' button on our website (www.thedword.com), and to my great surprise and pleasure, people actually clicked on it. They would include little notes with their donations, which came in from around the world (5 euros here, 10 yen there). One woman wrote in a proposal: 'If I donate 10 BPS, will you show real dykes fucking?' Happily, that was already in the script and we were able to rent one more C Stand because of it!"

—Dasha Snyder, writer/creator/executive producer, *The D Word* (2005)

"I don't have the ability to money grub or fundraise, so instead, I shoot short, Super 8 and 16mm handmade, animated and experimental films. They're more like poems. Short, messy poems. I even hand process them myself sometimes for the look and to save money. Then I try to get someone to show them to people (usually festivals). My best strategy is to make very interesting work with very little money."

—Kelly Spivey, filmmaker, *Poor White Trash Girl-Class Consciousness* (2003)

"I moved to Europe eight years ago when I realized that living in America meant I either got into a career I didn't want

(graphic design) or compromising on the films I made or how I made them. Living in a country with proper arts funding has meant that my work can be as obscure/radical/experimental as it needs to be, and I can still get it funded so they don't just look like I cobbled them together. I've had films in Sundance and hundreds of festivals and bought for broadcast. I doubt any of this would have been possible in the U.S. where I would probably be living in New York as a probably very successful book cover designer."

—Tina Gharavi, producer/director, *Closer* (2000), and *Mother/Country* (2003)

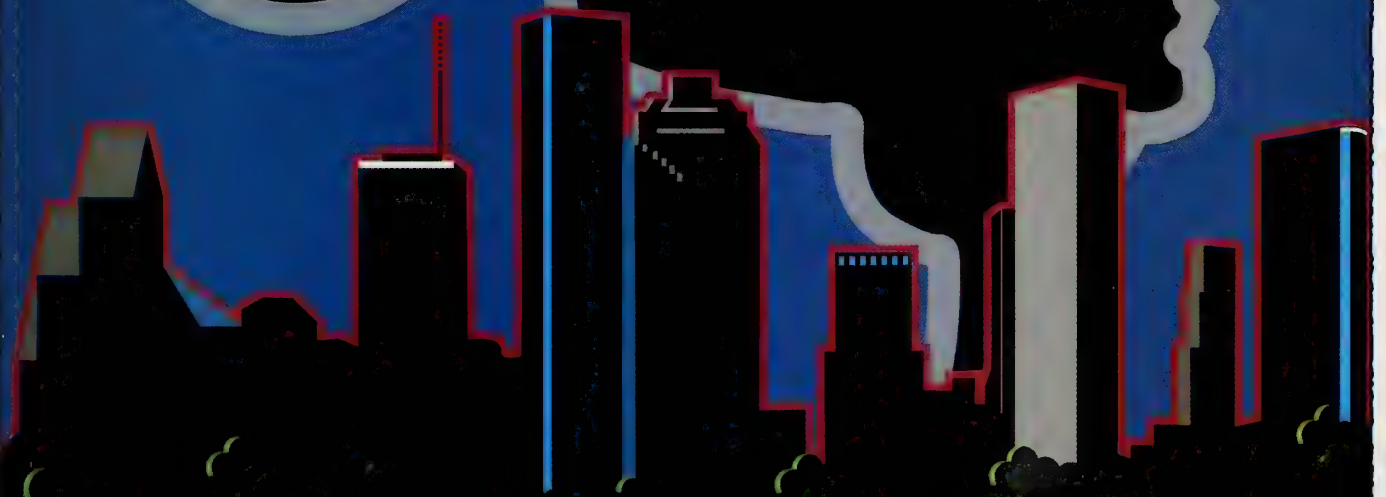
"I was involved in an industrial accident (right arm pulled into heavy machinery and smushed). After hospitalization and recovery, I received some settlement money and used it to finance/co-finance four features, *My Degeneration*, *Hippy Porn*, *Mod Fuck Explosion*, and *Fame Whore*. And no, I didn't intentionally plan this mode of financing."

—Jon Moritsugu, writer/director, *Fame Whore* (1997)

"I feel funny asking people for money to fund my projects; instead, I look for bartering, I-scratch-your-back-you-scratch-mine deals. For example, I like to proofread, so in the past I've asked a friend who is knowledgeable about audio for film to trade favors. He fixed the audio on my film; I revised his grant application. If bartering doesn't work, I resort to the old but timeless tradition of hustling: faking student IDs and sneaking into the A/V departments of local universities."

—Lala Endara, director, *Saul Searching* (2003)

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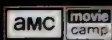
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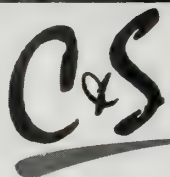
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Shana Liebman [Deputy Editor]

EDITOR'S LETTER

Dear Readers,

Every time I experience even the slightest devastation—a breakup with a boyfriend, a favorite shirt shrinks in the dryer, another free-spirited artist friend moves to suburban New Jersey—my mother's words of comfort are always the same: Well, at least you can write about it.

While I'm in the dramatic throes of misery, this is an immensely unsatisfying response, but, ultimately, my mother, as always, is right: Our best stories come from real-life intensities, no matter how small, and the writer's job is to use those moments to create stories that others will find meaningful.

Of course it's never that easy. Picture Barton Fink in his dreary hotel room, struggling to write his wrestling picture as evil Hollywood and his satanic neighbor conspire against him. Writing can feel just this hellish—frustrating, doomed, infinite, isolating, revelatory—which is perhaps the reason writers often seem so mysterious, and why we all, writers and non-writers alike, are so curious about their process.

For this issue, we grilled some insightful scribes about their craft—particularly in light of recent industry trends and technological innovations. Elizabeth Angell looks into the adaptation of popular books into screenplays—and why independents's choices are frequently different from those of the studios (page 37). Does a partner make writing easier,

or more complicated? Contributing writer Lisa Selin Davis asked a few savvy teams to dish about their collaboration techniques (page 29), while novelist Jeff Bens talked to writers about creating characters for the screen—and what they can learn from the novel (page 25). David Alm investigates how digital technology (from interactive TV to Machinima) is changing—perhaps irreparably—our notions about how a story should be told and by whom (page 33).

The impact of broadband and the recent onslaught of politically funded documentaries is the subject of the new book, *Deep Focus: A Report on the Future of Independent Media*—which Matt Dunne, the Vermont senator who founded the Vermont Film Commission, reviews (page 41).

Also in this issue, contributing writer Rick Harrison probes writer-director Ira Sachs about his new film *Forty Shades of Blue*, as well as what it means to be a gay Jew bumming smokes in Memphis (page 17). Freelance writer and first-time contributor to *The Independent*, Nicole Davis, sizes up New York's indie theater scene after the recent and controversial opening of the IFC Center (page 20). And South African filmmaker Tim Greene tells the story of making his feature debut, *Boy Called Twist*—a unique interpretation of the classic *Oliver Twist*—which had the longest list of associate producer credits in history (page 12). Speaking of credits, entertainment attorney Fernando Ramirez explains the terms all writers should understand when negotiating what could be their most important career-determiner—their screenwriting credits (page 45).

Finally, I want to thank *The Independent's* editor-in-chief Rebecca Carroll, who recently (and finally!) gave birth to her beautiful son Kofi, for supporting me in taking the reigns for this issue—it's been a most pleasurable challenge.

Enjoy, and thanks for reading
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MATT DUNNE is the Democratic state senator of Vermont and founder of the Vermont Film Commission. Previously, he served two and a half years as National Director of AmeriCorps VISTA (Volunteers in Service to America) and four terms as a Vermont state representative.

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TIM GREENE started directing in 1994 with his acclaimed short *Corner Caffie*, followed by numerous music videos and TV shows including "Hard Copy" and "Tsha Tsha"—the ground breaking series on love, sex, and ballroom dancing. His first feature *Boy Called Twist*, the story of a Cape Town street kid, based on Dickens' classic novel, *Oliver Twist*, screened at Cannes and will be released in South Africa this year.

RICK HARRISON is a reporter for *The Home News Tribune*, where he covers corruption and bad hair in Central New Jersey. He has a master's degree in journalism from NYU, and his work has appeared in *The Daily News*, *Newsday*, and *The Forward*. His more mindless musings can be read at www.rollingbones.blogspot.com.

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FERNANDA ROSSI, known as the Documentary Doctor, is a filmmaker and story consultant who helps filmmakers craft the story structure of their films in all stages of the filmmaking process. She has doctored over 100 documentaries and fiction scripts and is the author of *Trailer Mechanics: A Guide to Making Your Documentary Fundraising Trailer*. www.documentarydoctor.com.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Dear Editor,

It's ironic that, within an article ["Room for Input," July/August 2005] mentioning multiple social issue docs at this year's INPUT conference, writer Niall McKay doesn't once mention the social issue that surrounded the event itself—namely the ongoing San Francisco hotel boycott and labor battle, which included the Hilton where INPUT was based. Before INPUT, many folks like us had registered and made travel plans. As the event approached, we wondered if we could, in good conscience, violate a labor boycott. INPUT's host, ITVS, went to Herculean lengths to resolve the issue and to move parts of INPUT out of the hotel. In the end, a number of us did not go to INPUT because of the boycott. And some who did attend created screenings and events in support of the boycott. Okay, so these real life crises shouldn't overwhelm articles about movies, I can see that. But when the movies in the article don't shy away from such issues, it seems the article shouldn't either, particularly given the great magazine in our hands. But we live in curious times, when things like crossing a projectionists's picket line are judged mere inconveniences on our way to seeing the new arthouse sensation.

—Steven Bognar, Dayton, Ohio

CORRECTION

In the September, 2005 "Tools" section, we incorrectly stated that the Rural Route Film Festival petitioned Kodak to continue its Kodachrome 40 Super8 film stock, when it was actually filmmaker Josh Watson who launched this petition.

BETTY TENG, filmmaker, Brooklyn, New York, member since 1995

Betty Teng's screenplay *Maestro, Maestro* won the grand prize of the 2004 American Zoetrope Screenplay Contest.

DAVID GAYNES, filmmaker, New York, New York, member since 2000

David Gaynes's first documentary *Keeper of the Kohn* won the Jury Award for Best Documentary at the Vail International Film Festival as well as the Audience Award at the Palm Beach International Film Festival. It also screened at many festivals nationwide and will be presented at the 2005 IFP Market. The film tells the story of 74-year-old Peter Kohn, the field manager for the Middlebury College lacrosse team, who is believed to be autistic.

WILL PARRINELLO, Mill Valley Film Group, Mill Valley, California, member since 1986

Will Parrinello's documentary, *Dreaming of Tibet*, screened for the Congressional Human Rights Caucus in July, and features the stories of three Tibetan exiles. It explores the tragedy of Tibet while inspiring hope for the Tibetan cause. The film is being syndicated to PBS stations and had its Los Angeles premiere on KCET in August.

MARK DWORKIN, filmmaker, Clinton, Washington, member since 1978

Partners Melissa Young and Mark Dworkin received a Cine Golden Eagle for the feature documentary *Argentina: Hope in Hard Times*. The film premiered at the Seattle Art Museum in January 2005 and documents the inspiring, grassroots response to a recent devastating economic collapse in Argentina. It was also featured in the San Diego Latino Film Festival, the Boston International Film Festival, the Sin Fronteras Festival in Albuquerque, and in a special screening at the Carnegie Council for Ethics in International Affairs in New York.

JAY ROSENBLATT, filmmaker, San Francisco, California, member for over 10 years

Jay Rosenblatt's new film *Phantom Limb*

received the Best Documentary Award at the Belgrade International Documentary and Short Film Festival; Best Short Documentary at the Florida Film Festival; Special Jury Award at the Seattle International Film Festival; and the Onda Curta Short Film Award at IndieLisboa in Portugal. It was in



Members in the news

the Silver Wolf Competition at IDFA and has also screened at the Clermont-Ferrand Short Film Festival in France, Tampere Film Festival in Finland, Visions du Reel in Switzerland, Tribeca Film Festival, Full Frame Documentary Festival, and Silverdocs. His previous film *I Used to Be a Filmmaker* was broadcast along with *Hardwood* on POV in August.

DARIA PRICE, filmmaker, New York, NY, member since 2003

Daria Price's short film, *Survival of the Fittest*, won the Fusion Audience Award for Shorts at DancesWithFilms in L.A., and the Platinum Remi Award for Comedy Short at Worldfest-Houston International Film Fest. It screened at New York City's Reel Venus Film Festival in July and the Crested Butte Reel Fest in August. It is a satirical mystery about America's obsession with youth and beauty in an age when the greatest sin is to age.

CAROL STANGER, Pearl in an Oyster Productions, New York, New York, member since 2003

Carol Stanger's short film, *Saying "I Do,"* received audience awards for documentary at the Long Island Gay and Lesbian Film Festival, as well as at the Connecticut Gay and Lesbian Film Festival. Since last year, the film has been shown at the Anthology Film Archives in the New Filmmakers Salute Free Speech, and at the Cornell Cinema.

Saying "I Do," produced by Stanger and directed and edited by Jennifer Uihlein, tells the story of two lesbian families, one of whom won a lawsuit against Massachusetts for the right to wed.

MARILYN HUNT, filmmaker, Santa Fe, New Mexico, member since 2002

Marilyn Hunt's documentary *Dancing from the Heart*, about a Pueblo family dance troupe, received first prize in the dance and music-related category at Toronto's new ReelHeART Film Festival. The film was also a "Back by Popular Demand" pick and official selection at the Santa

Fe Film Festival where it had two of the largest audiences of the festival. It also screened at Dance on Camera at New York's Lincoln Center last January, and the Eleventh Video/Film Fest in Hungary in August.

CYNTHIA MCKEOWN, director/producer, Boston, Massachusetts, member since 1995

Cynthia McKeown's documentary, *One in Eight: Janice's Journey*, the story of one woman's struggle with breast cancer and her search for possible causes, will be broadcast on the Discovery Health Channel on October 20 at 8 pm. *One in Eight*, distributed by Fanlight Productions, was awarded the Jury Prize for Best Documentary at the 2004 New England Film and Video Festival, and has screened at many festivals throughout the US and Canada. For more info, please visit www.oneineight.net. ★

NEWS

Film Fest Fisticuffs

Michael Moore's festival inspires serious competition

By Katherine Dykstra

Both Tracy Kurtz, the spokeswoman for the Traverse City Film Festival, and Jim Hubbard, the founder and president of the American Film Renaissance, which helped to put on the Traverse Bay Freedom Film Fest, agree that neither of their respective events had anything to do with politics.

"It's not about the politics; it's about the movies," says Kurtz. "Our tagline was 'Just Great Movies'"

While Hubbard, who's film festival is taglined "Celebrate Faith, Family and Freedom," says, "We show films that conservatives would gravitate to more, but we're not political."

Funny, because the whole thing just sounds so, well, political. How did it happen then that two film festivals, headed by people in opposing political parties, descended on the same tiny Michigan city, over the exact same weekend in July?

The way Kurtz tells it, the Traverse City Film Festival began with three men: Michael Moore, Doug Stanton, the author of *In Harm's Way*, about the sinking of the USS Indianapolis, and John Robert Williams, a Traverse City photographer who had worked with Moore on the posters for his 2002 film, *Bowling for Columbine*. One evening in May, the three men were sitting around lamenting the current state of American film consumption, specifically the frequent shelving of brilliant independent films, which the men believe is due in most part to



American Film Renaissance supporters Dave Balsiger (*George Bush: Faith in the White House*) and Peace Commies's Jorge Torres [photo courtesy AFR]

"Hollywood politics." So they decided to do something about it, giving themselves eight weeks to put together a film festival.

"We sought to reclaim the magic and hoped that the public would respond with enthusiasm," says Kurtz. "Our goal was to have the people leave the theater feeling as if they'd just seen something special."

For three weeks, Moore and company were the only festival on the scene. Until Genie Aldrich, a local conservative activist, got wind of their plan.

"In the second week of June, I went to a city council meeting. The city notified that Michael Moore would be granted a permit to use tax-payer space for part of his film festival," says Aldrich. "But this town is festivaled out, it's packed all summer, we're limited in traffic, police..."

Aldrich's answer? Another film festival.

"So I went home that night and had the wherewithal to challenge him," says Aldrich. "Film festivals are great unless Michael Moore is running them. I had to advise him that he is not welcome here, there is no fan club for him here."

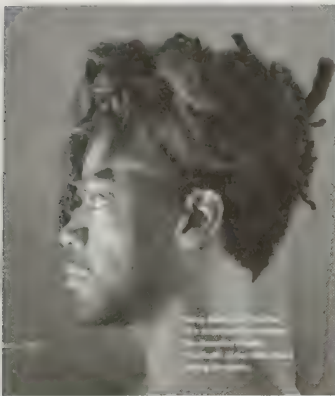
And so Aldrich and co-founder Cheryl Rhoads—who is an actress and writer in Hollywood, and whose family lives in Traverse City—enlisted the services of the Texas-based American Film Renaissance to put on their own right-leaning film festival, which they planned for the same weekend as Moore's.

"We wanted to cater to people who feel left out. Conservatives are not plugged into pop culture, mostly because they don't feel Hollywood shares their values," says Hubbard. "But I think, rather than boycotting a film, say if you didn't like *Fahrenheit 9/11*, go pick up a camera and make your own film." A noble statement, but one that weakens as soon as Aldrich spews forth a stream of "America-hating extremist Michael Moore" speak, which makes the mission sound a lot more like payback.

When asked about the competition between the two fests, Kurtz says, "I think everyone knew [The Freedom Festival] was being held, but no one allowed it to become any kind of focus. We remained

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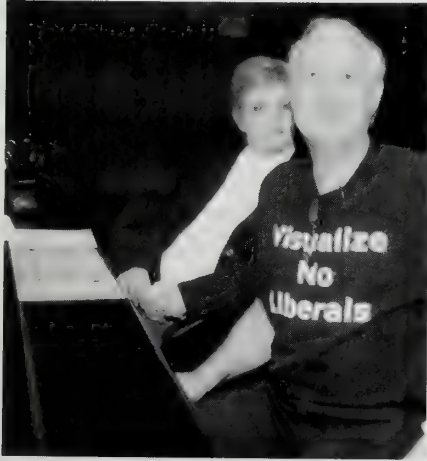
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dedicated and enthusiastic about what we were doing, we were not going to let anything divide us."

Although they were never divided, it's pretty clear that they were offended.

"I know that some of the blanket statements that came out were that the people working on this were left-wing extremist liberals, anti-American, anti-Christian, anti-family. But we maintained our sense of humor," says Kurtz. "I mean, I'm a stay-at-home mom with two kids. How's that



Enthusiastic festival attendees
[photo courtesy AFR]

for family values? If I'm so anti-family, why do I have these stretch marks?"

Both camps, of course, claim resounding success—and they're probably both relatively right—but the numbers speak more for Moore.

Fifty thousand (note that Traverse City's population is a mere 20,000) showed up to watch the Traverse City Film Festival's 31 films, which included *Mad Hot Ballroom*, the festival opener, *Me and You and Everyone We Know*, *Enron: The Smartest Guys in the Room*, and *The Baxter*. The films screened for \$7 in one of three theaters—one of which, the historic downtown State Theater, was specially resurrected for this event. With 500 volunteers, \$100,000 in local sponsorship, (the only non-local sponsor was Ben and Jerry), the festival cost a quarter of a million dollars.

The Traverse Bay Freedom Film Fest, on the other hand, hosted 1,000 people at ten screenings, 5 of which were independent, including *Michael Moore Hates America*, *In the Face of Evil: Reagan's War*

in *Word and Deed*, and *Charlotte's Web*. They had "volunteers coming out of our ears," and all the screenings were free.

All in all, despite the time restraints, both events came off without a hitch—except for one small problem in the projection room of the Traverse Bay Freedom Film Fest that occurred during the screening of *Michael Moore Hates America*.

"We were supposed to have the family version, but the film was ridden with the f-word," says Aldrich. "About 20 minutes into the film I was thinking, you know, this is exactly why we had this film festival to tone down the smut and sewage that comes out of Hollywood. So I went up to the podium and put a stop to the video. This is what we do not have in the Heartland way of life."

The Innovators

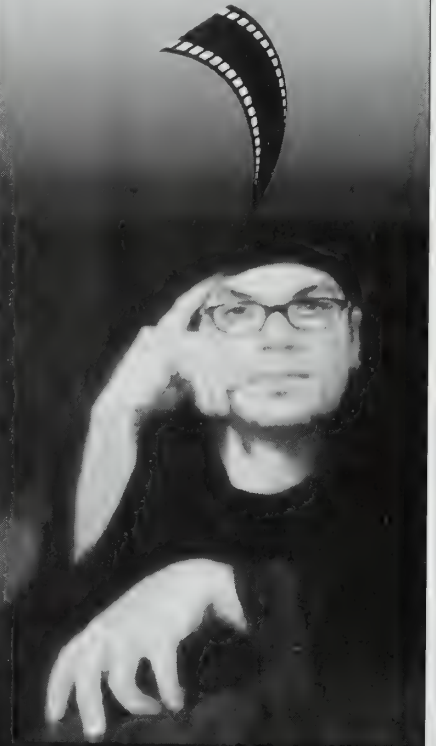
There's a reason that sequels, remakes, and films that start off as books have an easier time scoring distribution deals than movies with original screenplays—the former come with built-in audiences, one major indicator of a money-maker. The same concept works for movies made by name filmmakers, starring bankable actors, or written by well-known screenwriters. Fans equal instant audience. So what's a little original film sans an audience to do? Get one, of course.

Which is exactly what the creators of *Ten 'Til Noon*, an independent arthouse thriller, did.

Ten 'Til Noon begins with the last ten minutes of one man's life, which occurs after he has woken up to find himself in the company of two strangers. From there, we witness those same ten minutes shown from the points-of-view of nine other characters, each shedding more light on the original scene.

In November 2004, Paul Osborne, who wrote *Ten 'Til Noon's* screenplay, put a mini-trailer online. As he monitored interest over the following months, he had an idea. "I saw what the trailer could do and remembered what I was taught in film school marketing class," he says. "Which is that when you go to the distributor, you want to let them know who already knows about your film, and therefore how much work the distributor has left to do to get it out there."

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Ten 'Til Noon's Paul Osborne (above) and Scott Storm (right) [photo courtesy of Osborne]

With that in mind, Osborne launched an aggressive online grassroots campaign to cull an audience and garner distributor interest. He shopped the trailer to a slew of major film websites in the hopes that they might pick it up. And pick it up they did. Movie.com, Movielist.com, and Comingsoon.net were the first of more than 40 websites to carry the *Ten 'Til Noon* trailer. This generated buzz, drawing tons of curious internet surfers to the linchpin of his efforts, www.tentilnoon.com, the often-updated website, which began simply, with the trailer and a behind-the-scenes link.

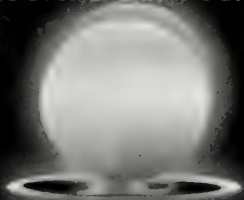
"We got over 2,000 hits our first day; it was startling," says Osborne. "At that point we realized we could play directly to our audience; we could build name-value."

When he says audience, Osborne imagines a sea of upscale arthouse enthusiasts, the same group who went gaga over Christopher Nolan's *Memento* (2000).

Since February, when the behind-the-scenes link went live, the site's content has spiraled: Scott Storm, the director, added a diary to which both he and Osborne contribute, the trailer has been updated and revised twice, and they've begun to run a series of mock-blogs. "In Scott's blog, he goes to meet studio execs wearing medieval gear and with knives and what not," says Osborne. "In another, the producer dresses up as a Girl Scout to find money." There's also a buzz page that lists every site that links to *Ten 'Til Noon*.

So, is it working? Well, the film, in post at the time of this magazine's publication, can only be shopped once it's finished.

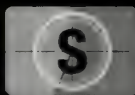
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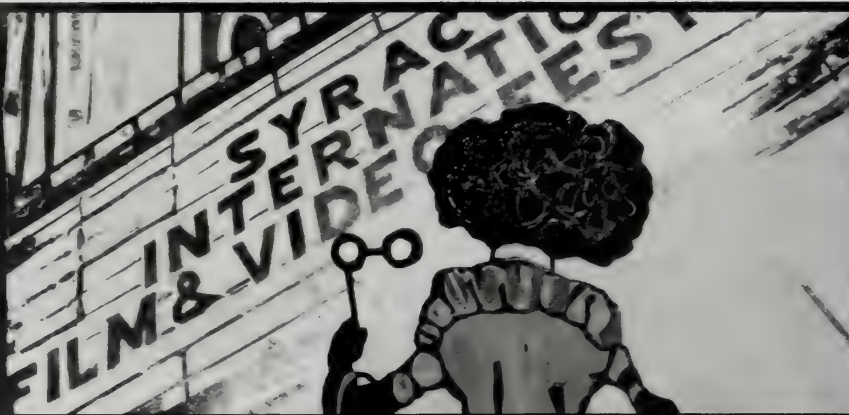
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But it looks like finding a distributor is going to be exponentially easier for these forward-thinkers.

According to Osborne, the website gets 1,000-plus hits every day, 200 of which are for the trailer. And the hits spike every time one of the blogs is updated. The site is also capable of tracking which files are downloaded and from where, enabling Osborne to show potential distributors the growth of the audience. But so far, the distributors have been coming to him.

"We've already been contacted by four or five reps and 20-plus distributors," says Osborne. "I'd say the majority of companies interested found us online."

The new leader of the NBPC

After 25 years at the helm, Mable Haddock is stepping down from her post as executive director of the National Black Programming Consortium, and Jacquie Jones, a Peabody Award-winning producer and public television administrator, is taking over.

Jones was the director of the KwaMashu Film Festival in Durban, South Africa, and she served as executive director for ROJA productions where she supervised TV series including *Matters of Race*. She is also a filmmaker—recent projects include a short doc about female rappers, *Freestyle*, and a work-in-progress about black women and breast cancer.

Although she is concerned with the Bush administration's threats to cut funding for public broadcasting, she is encouraged by "a tremendous revolution in access to the means of production through new digital tools that make it possible to realize

an independent vision for literally hundreds of what it cost just a decade ago."

As the NBPC's new leader, she plans "to continue, even in these embattled times, to ensure that our public media remains rich with African American voices, that NBPC can continue to be a resource and a home to independent filmmakers, and that we can provide you with even more services to the field."

MoMA salutes Jerome Hill

Jerome Hill wasn't only a filmmaker, photographer, painter, and composer, he was and still is the reason many important films have been made at all.

Hill, who was born in Minnesota, discovered film in France and settled in New York, created the Avon Foundation (later the Jerome Foundation) in 1964, to support emerging filmmakers, among them Spike Lee, Todd Haynes, and Mira Nair.

"The Foundation has supported films that other founders wouldn't dream of supporting because they're experimental or because of controversy," says Robert Byrd, senior program officer at the Jerome Foundation. "But we're not afraid of controversy, we invite it, we welcome it, we embrace it, we think it motivates people to think critically."

Beginning October 24, The Museum of Modern Art in New York, in conjunction with The Jerome Foundation, will honor the centennial of Hill's birth by showing many of the works made possibly by his support, as well as two of Hill's own major works: the documentary *Albert Schweitzer* (1957) and *Film Portrait* (1972), an experimental contemplation on his own life.

Also this month, MoMA will exhibit work by Michael Snow, one of the preeminent experimental filmmakers working in the 1950s through today, and Sam Taylor-Wood, a young British filmmaker who has never been shown in North America until now. Both filmmakers share an affinity for stillness: Snow's *Wavelength for those who don't have the time* (2003), and *Solar Breath (Northern Caryatids)* (2002) are contemplative and quiet. Just as are the three works by Taylor-Wood, which include, *Beckham*, a portrait of a sleeping figure, and *Still Life*, a bowl of fruit slowly decaying before the camera.

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Boy Called Twist



Jarrid Geduld plays a Capetown street kid named Twist in *Boy Called Twist*
[photo courtesy Tim Greene]

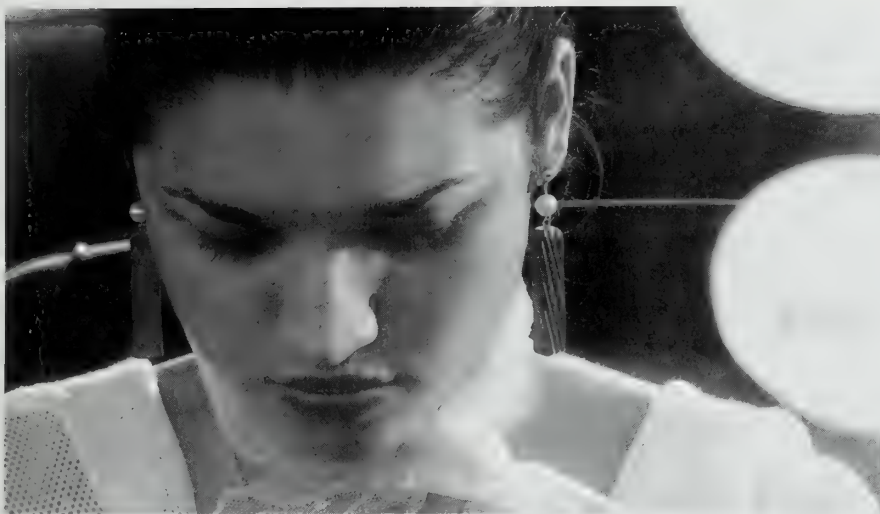
A South African fairy tale with 1,000 investors

By Tim Greene, writer/director/producer

They say necessity breeds invention, and so it was with my debut feature film, *Boy Called Twist*.

Based on the classic Dickens novel, *Oliver Twist*, the film tells the story of a street-kid's search for love in contemporary Cape Town, South Africa. Shot on Super 16mm, completed for \$500,000, and screened at Cannes, *Twist* was released in South Africa in September 2004—with the longest list of associate producer credits in history.

Although the South African film industry has been teetering on the brink of emergence for as long as I can remember, finding finance for a first feature film shot there



Kim Engelbrecht in *Boy Called Twist* [photo courtesy Tim Greene]

is still next to impossible for an independent director. At the time, I'd made a drama series for television, several shorts, commercials, and a few music videos, but the odds of raising my initial \$150,000 budgeted to shoot the film seemed as remote as ever. If I was going to lose my long-form virginity, I would have to think outside the box.

The notion of approaching a large group of people to each invest a small amount of money into a film had been brewing in my mind for many years, but it was only when I decided to adapt *Oliver Twist* that I realized I had the perfect project to put my plan into action. The film is based on a known work, and it deals with the social phenomenon of homeless children—both of which made it the perfect vehicle for an unknown filmmaker with an unknown cast and a first time producer to get support from a wide range of well-wishers.

First, I got friends and family to pledge their support. The deal was this: If they signed, they agreed to put up R1000 (US \$150) if, and only if, I managed to get another 999 other pledges. Once I'd hit on everyone I knew, I extended my search to people in the local film industry, most of whom are keen to see locally financed films being produced.

By the time I reached 200 pledges, the website was up (www.twistmovie.co.za) where the wider public could visit and pledge their support—still subject to the proviso that no one would part with a cent unless 1,000 pledges were found. It

took about a year for the “Honor Roll” of names to reach 1,000. In that time I did newspaper and radio publicity, and sent periodic emails to the growing list of soon-to-be investors, updating them with our pledge status. When it came time to turn warm sentiment into cold cash, about 80 percent of those who pledged paid up. We'd anticipated some fall off, however, so replacing the 200-odd defaulters wasn't too difficult.

As cash started to come in, my production company, Twisted Pictures, partnered with Monkey Films, a top-of-the-range local production house that does a lot of commercial work. (We gave them shares of our company in return for their infrastructure, contacts, skills, and the many years of goodwill they'd accumulated in the industry.) I'd also done a lot of research into finding the right business model for the project and had realized that the only framework that would legally accommodate such a wide investment base was a public company—which in South Africa must have a board of directors, be audited, hold annual AGMs, and publish financials in the public domain. Not the ideal mechanism for a low-budget indie feature.

My board refused point-blank to start signing checks until all the money had been banked, which was just one of the many checks-and-balances that the public company structure imposes—at first to my chagrin, but increasingly to my delight. It's tempting to cut corners when a project swings into production, but the

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Bart Fouche as Sykes in *Boy Called Twist* [photo courtesy Tim Greene]

pressure of pleasing 1,000 investors meant that we had to account for every cent. Looking back, I wouldn't have had it any other way—even though it meant that I had to personally bankroll the months between fund-raising and fund-spending.

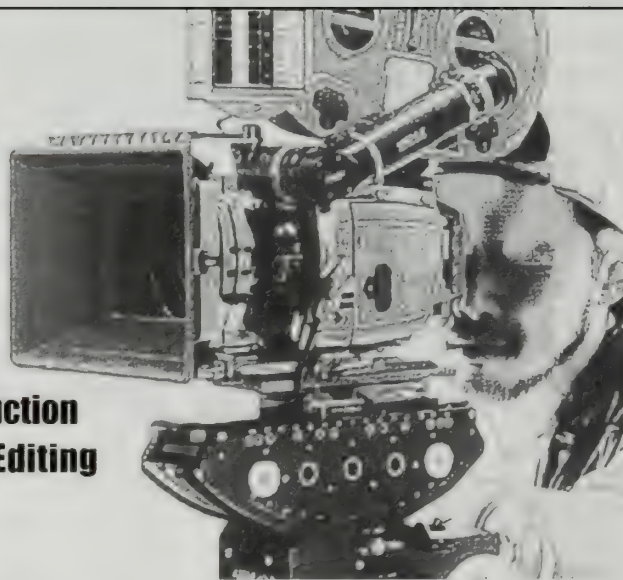
Over the past decade, Cape Town has become a sought-after destination for commercials, which means that although we don't have much of an independent film industry, we do have skilled and professional crews, and a good support infrastructure. Also, since the winter season is wet, a lot of gear sits on the shelves for months, so it's possible to get off-season discounts. On top of that, top-notch technical and creative crew are as keen as everybody else to see the industry blossom and are very generous with their time if the right project comes along.

The actual shoot took 21 days, and we were constantly at the mercy of the weather and the zillion other factors that make independent movie-making such a thrilling and terrifying experi-

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ence. After shooting, we managed to squeeze an offline edit out of the production budget, and by the new year, we had an Avid offline, and no more money.

Fortunately the South African National Film and Video Foundation had recently started a government mandate to build up the local industry. They agreed to contribute \$150,000.00—which wasn't exactly a grant or a loan; they wanted their money back if the film earned it, but there was no penalty if it didn't. A couple of wealthy philanthropist investors and a few cultural grants later, we had the money to finish a 35mm print.

It's rare for local productions in South Africa to recoup even their P&A costs at the local box office. The TV, rental, and through-sales ancillaries are held by the local distributor as collateral against P&A exposure. The weakness of the local box office means that South African films bank on the international market for financial success—and therein lies a major problem. Producing local films with two eyes on potential international sales has, thus far, given rise to some pretty watered-down, homogenized movies—many of which star foreign actors in South African roles. And these don't play well at home or abroad.

But *Boy Called Twist* is not one of those films: It's visceral and honest and full of local color and texture. At the Cape Town World Cinema Festival premiere in November 2004, the film got a standing ovation from a very partisan, first-night audience, which included about 500 of our investors. The film has since played at Cannes and has been invited to several European festivals. *Twist* has also had a very warm public response in South Africa, and the distributor's test audience rated the film eight out of 10, which is heartening. Of course the question remains: Will this success translate into our 1,000 investors ever getting their money back? Only time will tell. ★

For more information on *Boy Called Twist*, check out www.twistmovie.co.za.



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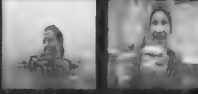
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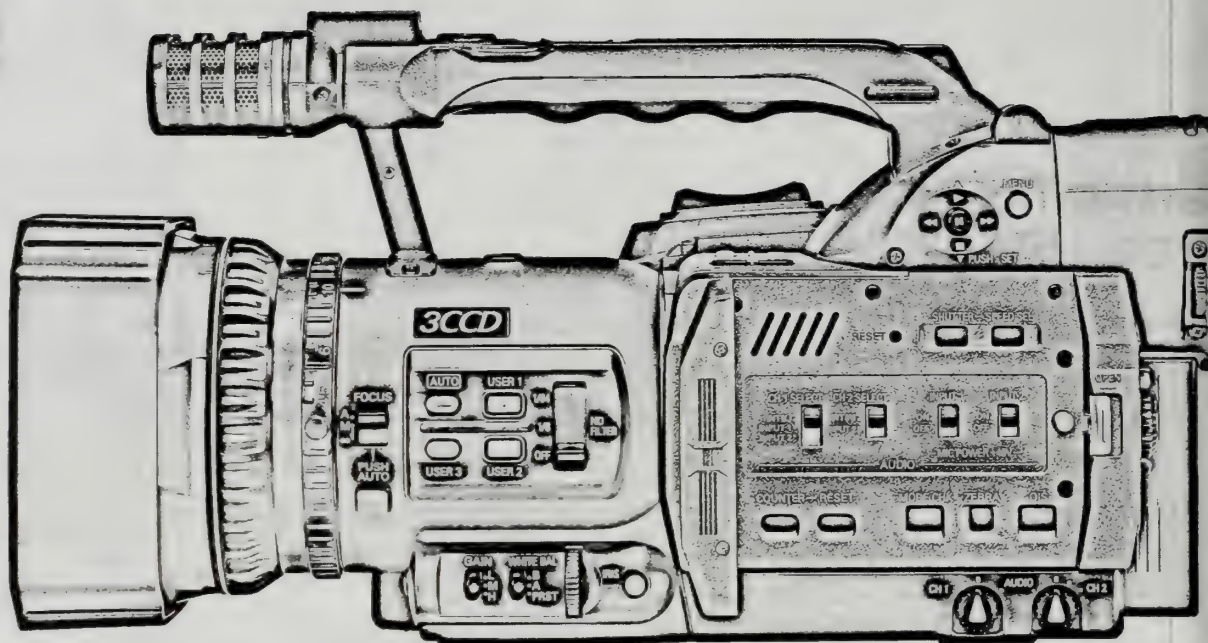
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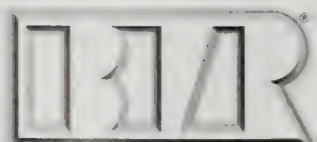


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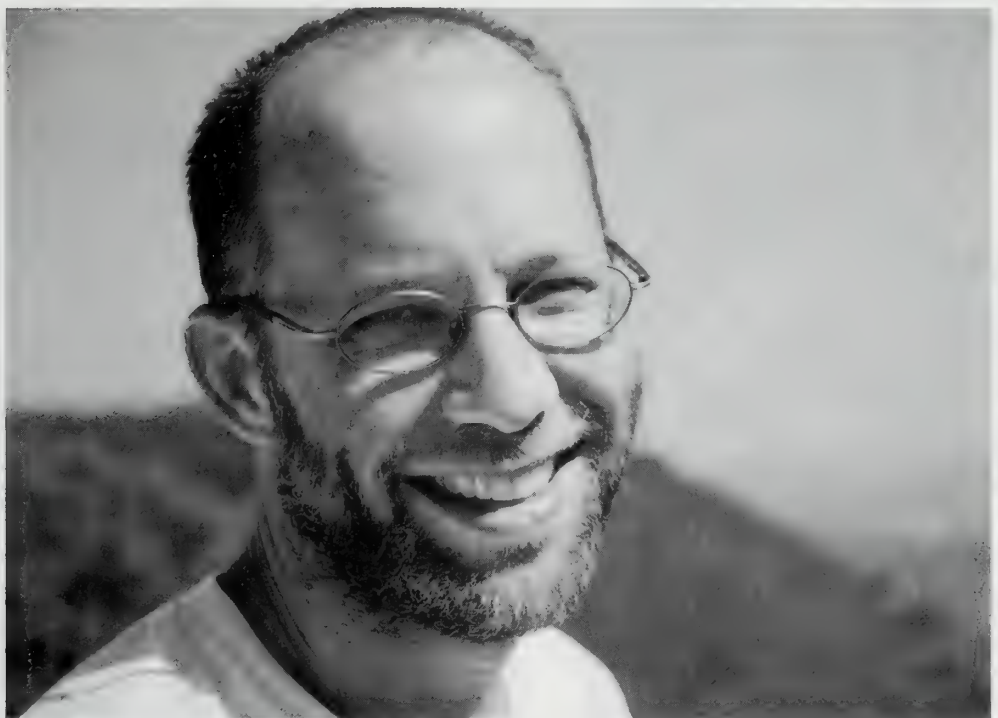
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The Many Shades of Ira Sachs

A writer/director as colorful as his characters



Ira Sachs [photo by Cam Sanders]

By Rick Harrison

Ira Sachs won't let me watch him bum cigarettes.

We've spoken for hours—about what it was like to grow up gay and Jewish in Memphis, the benefits of 15 years with the same therapist, and how it feels to have his 68-year-old father date 20-year-old women.

Sachs, eager for a smoke before noon, also shamelessly volunteers that although he bums five or six cigarettes a day, he won't succumb to the temptation to buy a pack. And no, he doesn't consider this

habit to be bad karma. "I get good interactions," he says, noting that when people say no, it provides helpful negative reinforcement.

But just as I'm ready to watch him carefully select the right benefactor outside of his lower Manhattan office, he politely shoos me away.

"It's personal," he says. "It's like masturbation."

Filmmaking, however, is decidedly collaborative, even for a writer-director like Sachs.

With *Forty Shades of Blue*, which won the Grand Jury Prize at Sundance this

year and will see a limited US release this month, Sachs formed the original idea in solitude but then gathered an army to execute it. His army fought some internal battles along the way and even broke apart in one instance, but as Secretary of Defense Donald H. Rumsfeld has said, you go to war with the army you've got, not the army you wish you had. And Sachs came through with an artistic victory.

Forty Shades of Blue tells the story of Laura, a Russian woman played by Dina Korzun, who has married and had a child with Alan, an older man and legendary

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the return of Alan's petulant, married son (Darren E. Burrows), Laura grapples with the realization that her life has drifted into a rhythm that she can't really dance to. Alan can be charming, sentimental and tender. Or boorish, insensitive and unfaithful. Her life is comfortable, but her spirit is restless.

Sachs always wanted to make a movie about a character who is familiar yet rarely the focus in most mainstream films. "I wanted to look at a woman who's usually on the periphery, in the shadow of a powerful masculine man," Sachs says, his tightly-trimmed beard and gold-rimmed glasses revealing an easy, brainy power of his own. "Turn the camera on her and ask who she is. Let's just follow her; forget Dustin Hoffman [in 1978's *Straight Time*, for instance]—let's follow Theresa Russell."

Rohatyn became prickly—more Sid and Nancy than Ron and Nancy (without the heroin and knives, of course) during the seven years of re-writes and attempts to secure financing.

"Any director who continues to work has to learn that's part of the job," Sachs says, speaking of skirmishes with meddling financiers. "Ultimately, if you make a compromise, that's a disservice—you haven't been a good director, haven't navigated the waters well. Having control and facilitating control is what directing is. I got to make exactly the kind of film I wanted to make."

But when asked about his current relationship with Rohatyn, Sachs flashes a nervous grin and plays the "if-I-don't-have-something-nice-to-say-I-won't-say-anything-at-all" card.

"As a collaborator, I sort of felt I was



Rip Torn celebrates in *Forty Shades of Blue* [photo courtesy of First Look Pictures]

Sachs also chose to set his story in Memphis, the city of his youth and location of his first feature film, *The Delta* (1996). But most of the writing for *Forty Shades* fell to friend and co-collaborator Michael Rohatyn—a first time screenwriter and musician who scored the music for *The Delta*, as well as for Rebecca Miller's films *Angela* (1995), *Personal Velocity* (2002), and *The Ballad of Jack and Rose* (2005).

The relationship between Sachs and

writing it for him, but not so much with him," Rohatyn says of Sachs. "He would carefully read it and give his notes on it, and we would argue those notes. Then whenever he would leave, I would let him do what he wants."

But there was no denying Sachs's film knowledge and talent. "Ira taught me about movies," Rohatyn says. "He has incredible taste and is really the most sophisticated cineaste that I've ever met. He would send me to look at movies by



Ira Sachs (right) on set with Darren Burrows [photo by Jawal Nga]

these directors, like Maurice Pialat, which was like listening to The Beatles for the first time. And then to try to write a movie like that —*Forty Shades of Blue* winds up being something I'm very proud of and a great tribute to Ira."

Tellingly, Ira rarely refers to *Forty Shades* as "my film," which shines a light on some behind-the-scenes bruised ego hubbub. But the film obviously has roots in Sachs and in Memphis. Sachs was born in Memphis in 1965 to Ira and Diane Sachs. His mother, a sociology professor at Rhodes College, divorced his father when Ira was three, then took Ira and his two older sisters on long trips to Europe, spending weeks at a time in England or a farm in France.

But it was his father who perhaps made the biggest impression on him, at least as far as *Forty Shades of Blue* is concerned. "My father is a real original," Sachs says. "One of the most original people I've ever known. He has very little superego; no shame or guilt. Luckily he's not a psychopath." Sachs smirks. When people ask Sachs's father what church he belongs to, his father responds, "The Church of What's Happening Now, Baby."

The elder Ira has seven children between the ages of 8 and 43, from four different women, three of whom he married. But Sachs wants to set the record straight. "My father is a sweetheart—he has no temper, and he's very generous,"

he says. "The character in the film is not my father."

Which isn't to say his father isn't a character. "I've always marched to the beat of a different drum," Ira Sachs, Sr. says from his home in Park City, Utah where he housed 11 of Ira's cast and crew during Sundance. "Perhaps it was some inspiration for Ira to do the same."

Perhaps, although his son, out of the closet since he was 16, has been through his own share of formative experiences. Growing up and especially as president of his temple youth group, Sachs says that he experienced more anti-Semitism than homophobia. While attending an inner-city high school, "boys would throw pennies at you."

He tells such stories with a wry, unfazed smile, which is probably the result of 15 years in therapy. "I believe in the talking cure," he says. "For me, it's very much a part of my creative development—understanding human interaction. Good therapy helps you understand people better, and bad therapy makes you feel you are more important than you are."

Sachs immersed himself in the children-run Memphis Children's Theatre from sixth grade through high school. "It had the most diverse group of people I'd ever been involved with," he says. "Black kids, white kids, rich kids, poor kids."

He made his directing debut in high school (*Our Town*) and went on to direct

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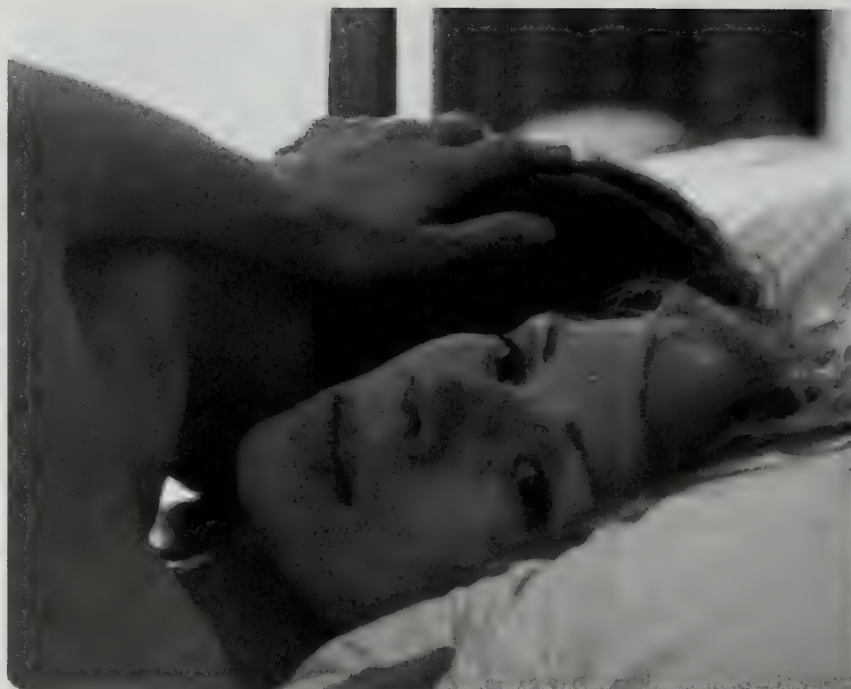
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Dina Korzun in *Forty Shades of Blue* [photo courtesy of First Look Pictures]

mostly experimental theater at Yale. But it was during a semester abroad in Paris that he gained his most valuable education. "I was a lonely college student who didn't speak too much French," he says. "So I saw 181 movies in a three month period. I had never seen a Cassavetes film or a Fassbinder film. It was like baseball card collecting behavior." Despite these influences, Sachs wound up modeling his style after Ken Loach, whose camera remains mostly fixed and observant, allowing the actors to own their space.

In 1992, Sachs made the short film *Vaudeville*, financed for \$50,000 by his parents and with a few small grants. He returned to Memphis after a 10-year absence in 1994 to prepare *The Delta*, a personal film about a boy coming to grips with his sexuality and the unintended impact his privileged status has on someone even further outside society.

In happier times with Rohatyn, Sachs took the *Forty Shades* script to the Sundance Writer's Lab, where he received guidance from Stewart Stern, who wrote the screenplays for *Rebel Without a Cause* (1955) and *The Last Movie* (1971). "It was comforting to hear people who knew

more than you tell you that you were doing nothing new, and all you have to do is go back to basics and tell the story well," Sachs says.

While the origin and intelligence of *Forty Shades* can be traced to Sachs and Rohatyn, its emotion oozes out of its actors: Korzun, Torn, and Burrows.

Burrows doesn't have to dig deep to praise Sachs. "Ira has so much self-confidence, especially for a director new in his career," he says. "There is often a fear with a new director that they hold on so tight it almost slips through their fingers, but he had complete control."

Which isn't to say there wasn't conflict. Torn says: "Making a film is like a military operation. It's not lovey-dovey all the time. Brothers can wrangle."

Burrows applies a more positive spin. "I think Ira thrived on the tension," he says. "It's all a part of the creativity and the dance. Like a big ballroom dance, and if there's just one guy telling everyone how to dance, it becomes stale."

Choreographing his life and art from Memphis to Paris and New York, Ira Sachs seeks fresh interactions—not shrink-wrapped and uniform, but loose and unpredictable. ★



IFC Crashes the Scene

By Nicole Davis

New York cinephiles will endure a great deal of discomfort to see great independent films: the noise of the F train at the Angelika, cramped seating at the Film Forum, the schlep to Brooklyn to see a Wong Kar Wei series at BAM Rose Cinemas. Even the latest potential deterrent—the union picket lines outside the IFC Center—didn't stop indie fans from patronizing New York City's newest arthouse theater. Despite the ongoing protests about the IFC Center's use of non-union projectionists, Miranda July's *Me and You and Everyone We Know*, which opened the theater in June, grossed \$40,000 in its

first week, far surpassing the management's expectations.

The IFC's success flies in the face of Hollywood's 19-week summer slump. In fact, our informal survey of the city's major independent theaters suggests they've all managed to dodge the box-office bullet. Obviously, the long-suffering film fans deserve some thanks. But the real reason that New York's independent theaters continue to thrive—even with a fancy newcomer in their midst—is that each one has established a unique reputation for itself.

The Landmark Sunshine Cinema sets itself apart from other downtown theaters by offering independent fare in a goopplex setting. The L.A.-based

Landmark, now owned by the Samuel Goldwyn company, operates 57 theaters in 14 states, and it employs the same stadium-style seating and state of the art sound you'd find in an AMC theater.

"What makes us unique is our top-notch facility—it's the best theater to see a film in the Village," says head film buyer Ted Mundorff. The leg room alone helps the Sunshine siphon off downtown audiences from the Film Forum and the Angelika's shoebox theaters, and its popularity, in turn, has made it a top pick among distributors.

"Within the film community," says Mundorff, "everybody knows how each film performs at different theaters. Distribution companies will look at that gross, and say 'Hey, we really like how

our last film did at the Sunshine, and so we think the Sunshine's the right place for [our new film]." The success of Wong Kar Wei's *In the Mood for Love* at the Sunshine in 2000, for instance, made the theater the natural choice to open *2046* last summer.

"We do take chances," says Mundorff, citing the Sunshine's recent run of *Caterina in the Big City* (2003). "It had a very small distributor, and we definitely took a risk because it didn't have the marketing muscle that films from Fox Searchlight Pictures or Paramount Classics would have. But we thought the film was worthwhile." Still, the reality is that New York is an expensive place to open a movie, one that requires pricey publicists and ads in the New York Times. If that's not in the distribution budget, the theater itself must pick up the slack.

Smaller houses lure audiences with more grassroots publicity. Karen Cooper, the director and programmer of first-run films at the Film Forum, boasts a website that attracts 8,000 visitors a day and a newsletter that goes out to 25,000 sub-

scribers. The theater has a strong marketing arm on staff and will go out of its way to expose new filmmakers.

The Sunshine and the IFC Center may have better seats, and the backing of much larger corporations, but the six screen Angelika has been around longer—which is a significant bonus for distributors.

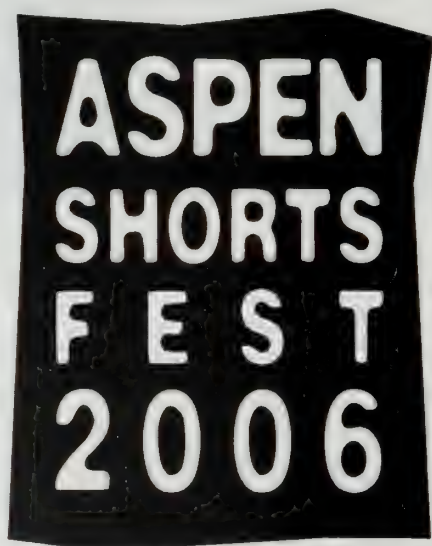
"The Angelika is virtually a name brand in the Village, unlike the Landmark or the IFC, which are still establishing their reputations," says George Mansour, the 71-year-old film buyer who advises vice president Ellen Cotter on which films the Angelika should book.

Distributors often have an idea of where they want their film to open, and the Angelika, says Mansour, "seems to attract an audience with an edgy profile." For a "young, hipper, Jim Jarmusch-type film," the Angelika would be the choice, as it was for *Broken Flowers* this year. If the movie is skewed older and subtitled, on the other hand, Lincoln Plaza would be a better venue. But these pre-conceived notions don't always work in the Angelika's favor.

"We wanted *Murderball*—everyone did. But when we didn't get it, it was important to know that we could plug in *The Beat That My Heart Skipped* or *9 Songs*. You have to find some unknown film to screen at the same time." One option is to find a film that may not be "aesthetically great" but will appeal to a certain audience, like the Israeli film *Walk on Water* (2004). "It wasn't a great movie," says Mansour. "But it was well-done and it tapped into an ethnic audience."

The Film Forum's Cooper goes out of her way to expose her audience to unknown filmmakers. "I think we're the single most important institution [in the city] for doing that," says Cooper. Like all programmers, she and partner Mike Maggiore spend time on the festival circuit scouting out films, but, unlike at most theaters, the pair will also consider movies sent over the transom. When we spoke, a dozen DVDs sat at Cooper's feet, all in need of viewing in the next few weeks.

"At this point," says Cooper, "we have so much work that comes in, we're not



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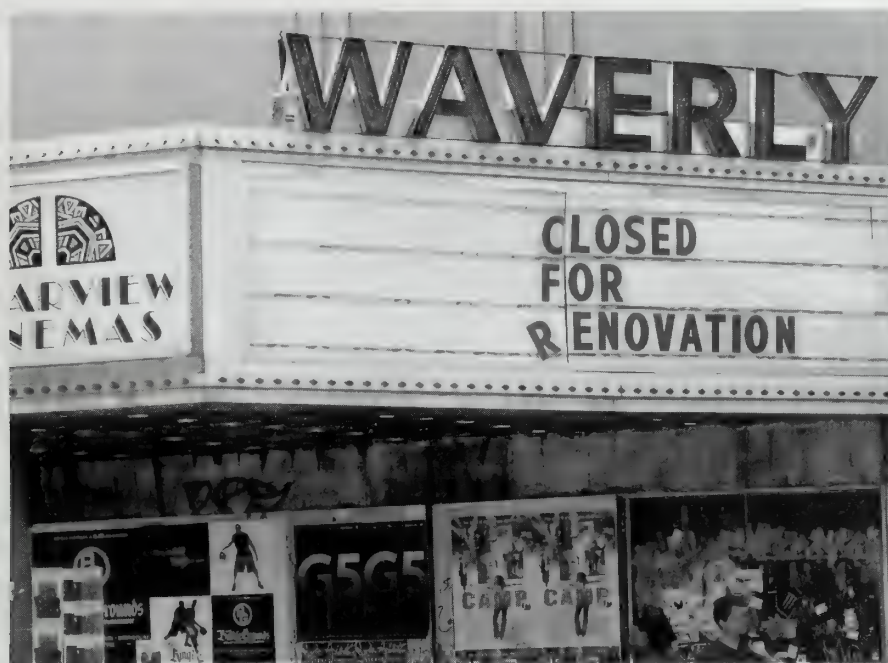
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The old Waverly Theater was transformed into the IFC Center this year [photo courtesy of Bogdanow Partners Architects]

taking unsolicited films. We have to have materials sent in advance that make us want to see it."

Her criteria is simple: The work should be "passionate and intelligent and break boundaries," and she likes to include films with a political agenda. The theater has a rich history of premiering documentaries, which run the gamut from big releases like *The Brandon Teena Story* (1998) to more obscure docudramas such as *On the Outs* (2004)—which opened at the theater this summer. The Film Forum's dedication to these films even extends beyond their run. When *On the Outs* moved to the IFC Center, the Film Forum noted the new home on their website.

"We didn't do it for the IFC," Cooper points out. "We did it for the filmmakers." She says she would do the same for other theaters, like the Quad Cinema or Cinema Village. "Often we will open a film, and then other people will continue to make money on it. That's fine—we want the filmmakers to have ongoing success. But we're the ones who made the initial commitment and took the risk."

The Film Forum will also go to great lengths to showcase the best possible prints for the repertory side of the theater. Bruce Goldstein, the director of

repertory programming, got into the business of distribution just to secure the classics he wanted to screen.

Both efforts—to expose new filmmakers and to restore cult classics—are part of the Film Forum's ongoing mission to cultivate a dedicated audience, which is really all an independent movie theater can hope for. The Walter Reade Theater, which is part of Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts, for example, keeps its audiences coming back in part because it repeats its popular festivals every year, such as the New York Film Festival, the New York Jewish Film Festival, and Scanners—a series for video and digital artists.

"Obviously the films change, but those are series we've established and they've proved very successful," says program director Richard Pena. "We have an audience who likes what they've seen, and they come back to see more."

As nonprofits, the Walter Reade and the Film Forum aren't governed solely by the theater's gross, and both Pena and Cooper emphasize this freedom in their programming decisions.

"We don't have any agenda other than showing the best possible films," says Cooper. Her distinction is meant as a slight dig at commercial houses like the



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IFC Center. Many suspect the IFC's interests lie only in promoting its parent company's films, but vice president and general manager John Vanco sees the Center falling somewhere in between these two extremes.

"I think of us as a for-profit theater that acts like a nonprofit," says Vanco. IFC-produced and distributed films will certainly occupy one of the Center's three screens much of the time, but Vanco isn't taking all his cues from above. He says his role is not unlike the one he held at Cowboy Pictures, the now defunct distribution company he co-founded.

"In some ways it's similar to the acquisitions policy that Noah Cowan [Cowboy Pictures co-founder] and I had, in that we only went after films that we were really excited about." The Center's premiere of *Darwin's Nightmare* last August is one case in point. After seeing it at the Toronto International Film Festival, Vanco committed to showing it at the center before it even had a US distributor. Wendy Lidell at International Film Circuit has since picked it up, in part

because the film's agent told her it was going to open at the IFC Center. (Note to anyone seeking a distributor: "Knowing that a film is assured a New York opening can help secure one," says Lidell.)

Now, *Darwin's Nightmare* is turning into a filmmaker's dream. Its Wednesday night US premiere grossed \$1,465. On Thursday, it grossed nearly \$2,000. The strong mid-week showing says to Lidell that it could bring in \$20,000 a week—excellent numbers for a little-known documentary about the horrifying plight of Tanzanian fisherman. It's now slated to open in 50 cities.

"We really see that as an example of our mission—to take a movie like that and get some attention for it," says Vanco.

The IFC Center distinguishes itself in other ways. There's the adjoining restaurant and bar, a takeoff of the Tribeca Film Center (formerly the Screening Room, which is now used for the Tribeca Film Festival and private screenings.) Editing suites, due to open this fall, will be used primarily to edit IFC films, movie trail-

ers, and shorts that the Center screens before every feature—a perk no other New York theater boasts. Even the animated trailer for the Center is unique. Its litany of "No's" includes everything from the familiar "No Cell Phones" to its refreshing "No Commercials" policy.

"The most that a theater like ours can aspire to," says Vanco, "is to develop a relationship with an audience that will elevate the chance of little-known films to be seen." Competing for his neighbor's business, he insists, is not a priority.

"There are so many great theaters here doing different things, and there are so many good movies that are deserving of a good home," he continues. "There will certainly be moments when there will be some kind of competition over a particular film, but I don't feel competitive with them."

Vanco's neighbors don't necessarily feel as warm and fuzzy. The Sunshine's Ted Mundorff agrees that the key to an independent theater's success is to develop its own niche. "But we're still competing for the same dollar," he says. ★

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Paul Schneider and Zoëy Deschanel in David Gordon Green's *All the Real Girls*
[photo courtesy Sony Pictures Classics]

Creating COMPELLING CHARACTERS

What the screenwriter can learn from the novel

BY JEFF BENS

“**W**hen I start a novel, I generally don’t have much more than a loosely formulated premise with regard to plot,” says novelist Jonathan Tropper (*Everything Changes*, *The Book of Joe*, *Plan B*). “What I do have is a very clear idea of a protagonist, a personality, a composite of fears, foibles, quirks, and drives.”

In film scripts, the depth and strength of characters is just as

important as it is in the novel. However, because screenwriters have more limited means to express the internal, developing characters often requires different techniques.

Andrew Wagner (whose film *The Talent Given Us* just received the Best First Feature Film prize at the Michael Moore-founded Traverse City Film Festival) says, “As our protagonist becomes more active in the pursuit of something known or pre-conscious or both, the narrative responds with greater situa-



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The Wagners on their trip in *The Talent Given Us* [photo courtesy of Chelsea Gilmore]

tional resistance. The root of a compelling character is his or her awakening to necessity." But because interior monologues require distracting devices like voice-overs, this quality is often difficult to achieve in a screenplay,

"In creating character for the screen," says Tropper, "the ability to present personality through visuals and dialogue is, naturally, crucial, since there is almost no acceptable way to introduce any kind of narrative exposition without calling the viewer's attention to the storytelling and away from the story. Once you have to shout, 'Pay no attention to the man behind the curtain,' Oz's cover is already blown... When it comes to characters I find it helpful to think like a screenwriter, and I ask myself, how can I reveal this character's essence in action (visual) and dialogue, as opposed to exposition. In my estimation, this is the purest form of creating a character, where the essence is conveyed rather than explained."

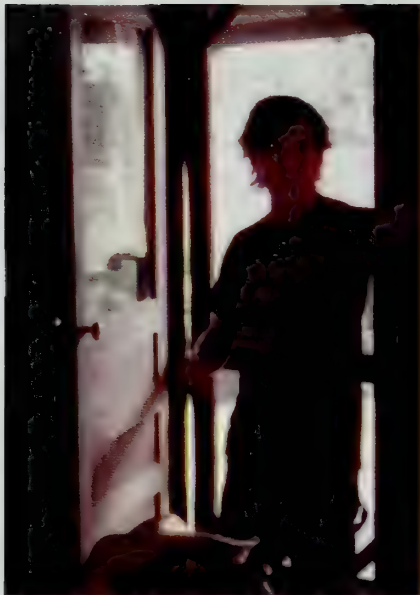
Joan Silber, author of the novels *Household Words*, *In the City*, *In My Other Life*, and *Lucky Us*, says she thinks "fiction is based on the premise that people reveal themselves through their behavior. They might have quite different inner lives but what

they do is still who they are, and they mostly do it to each other. It's hard to create interest if a character is alone too much. I say this knowing how much I like writing anyone's moments of solitary reflection."

It is across these moments of solitary reflection when using the visual to connect the viewer to the character becomes most essential. If the protagonist simply reports how she feels, it's much less likely to resonate.

Filmmaker David Gordon Green (*George Washington*, 2000, *All the Real Girls*, 2003, *Undertow*, 2004) makes a study of these revealing visual details. "I like to listen to and even record conversations on buses and trains. I go to the post office at lunchtime when there are the longest lines. The DMV, night court, public places where conversations and exhibited feelings are as diverse as the characters themselves. Settings and locations are everything. They speak for your characters. Voices, faces, behavior can all get an emotional reaction out of us."

But, Silber cautions, detail doesn't have to be exclusively visual. "A quoted bit of remembered dialogue, a tone of voice, a distinctive accent—wouldn't these serve the same purpose?



David Gordon Green directing *Undertow*
[photo courtesy of Lisa Muskat]

Sensory detail is indeed crucial, but I don't think there's a template for the proportions needed," she says.

Tropper suggests another useful technique for screenwriters. "I internalize this character in much the same way a method actor might internalize the traits of the character he is going to play. In doing so, I imbue the character with my own lesser,

impure qualities: my anger, my insecurity, my selfishness, my narcissism. This lets the character evolve. If I've been successful, then when I drop this character into the loose premise I've constructed, the plot will pretty much take shape around him."

Silber mentions a famous quote from playwright August Strindberg: "When a rape takes place in a greenhouse, it's not necessary to name every plant." But, Silber says, "I do get to know my characters by defining them through work and through location. All of that is crucial to my summoning them."

In screenwriting, action determines plot. However, Green cautions "characters aren't there to service plot. Action should serve characters and be observed from around corners or with eyes squinted." In *George Washington*, for instance, Green establishes Rico's (Paul Schneider) loneliness by his surprising dialogue with a teenager (Curtis Cotton III): Against a backdrop of rusted building shells and abandoned truck lots, the characters talk about their love for their mothers and then walk into the setting sun across the barren concrete plateau, along an 18-wheeler graveyard, sparklers flaring in their hands.

Wagner's documentary-style fictional film, *The Talent Given Us*, is a low-budget study in externalizing the internal. There's not much plot: Wagner's real-life family travels from New Jersey to Los Angeles to visit their estranged son. But along the way, action by action, the characters emerge; by California, they've bared their hearts. For example, at a craps table in a low-rent casino, as Wagner's parents argue about the game, we see an entire marriage play out. "It is in the personal that we find characters who are idiosyncratic, unprecedented, and unafraid of imperfection, and most true because of their fidelity to being human," Wagner explains. "Being human, flaws and all, is how a character comes to take residence in the universal and form a connection with the audience."

Screenwriters have to be careful not to assume that a character's affability will create empathy in the viewer; audiences can see through characters who act in ways the writer hopes will charm, regardless of the truth of the action.

"There's this unwritten rule that a protagonist has to be sympathetic to some extent, so that the reader will connect with him," says Tropper. "I've always thought this was a crock. Make a character too 'likeable' and no one will connect with him. I think readers identify with deeply flawed characters, seeing in them fleshed out, exaggerated versions of their own more mildly presenting imperfections. A character saddled with larger, more readily apparent or confessed versions of these flaws, who nevertheless manages to stumble through a redemptive arc is someone with whom the reader will empathize, especially when his behavior is less than admirable."

Silber says that for her first book, "I planned to write about a family, first from the mother's point of view and then from the daughters'. But I already knew what the daughter thought—the stretch of trying to inhabit the often unlikely mother was much more interesting, and so I stayed with her."

Green puts it this way: "Maybe it's attractive, maybe it's repulsive, but when I read or pay money to see a particular character, I want to feel something."

Thus, the writer's task is to find the small traits, likeable or not, that actively define character.

In filmmaking, however, these traits often evolve once the script goes into production—actors and directors add their interpretations to characters. Green says that when he writes a character, he eventually has to trust the actor to "make it real. Get actors in the room and have them bring everything they've felt and beat each other and make the sentimental real." It's the truth of the sentiments and actions expressed by each character that connects the viewer or reader to the story—projected or printed.

"High-concept Hollywood films have proved time and again that artificial change leaves us feeling empty," says Wagner. The pressure to continually top each story, to continually delight the audience with the cleverness of the writer, often seems to stifle the fun long before the story has played to climax and resolution.

Ray Bradbury in *Zen and the Art of Writing* writes, "We know how fresh and original is each man, even the slowest and dullest. If we come at him right, talk him along, and give him his head.... And when a man talks from his heart, in his moment of truth, he speaks poetry."

"I have a few too many 500-page screenplays," says Wagner. "Born from the secret wish to attain the level of transcendence in the masterworks of my cinematic heroes, but when I was finally able to pull myself from the ditch of this masquerade, I did remember to take with me what was creatively vital about these marathons—the need to open over and over again, more deeply each time. It is in this act of surrender that characters are heard, found, and given breath." ★



The Coen Brothers—pictured here after *Raising Arizona*, their second film—have been writing together since the early 1980s [photo courtesy of Twentieth Century Fox]

ON THE SAME PAGE

Screenwriting teams discuss collaboration

BY LISA SELIN DAVIS

Earlier this year, I got a call from a friend of a friend—a former executive producer of a children's television show. He asked me, "Are you interested in writing for television?"

The truth was that writing for television had never been one of my goals, exactly, but the idea of emerging from my isolated writer's office and interacting with other human beings—not to mention making some serious cash—was tempting. I had visions lifted from the "Dick Van Dyke Show," or Neil Simon's "Laughter on the 23rd Floor": a joyous group of writers joshing around in a room as comic genius unfolded. So I told him yes and asked if he was working on a new show.

He answered no.

He was looking, I realized, for a writing partner, not a writer-for-hire. So I met him for coffee, understanding that I was being

auditioned for a part. We got along well—chatted excitedly, talked about everything except writing. When it was time for me to leave, I felt elated. It was like the best date I ever had.

Over the next two months, we played out an entire 20-year relationship—from the honeymoon to the divorce—all without writing a word together. We talked on the phone. We wrote long emails. (None of this was romantic; each of us lived with our respective smoochies. But it was strangely intimate—an artistic love affair.) When he finally told me his idea for a show, I was a little surprised, maybe the teensiest bit disappointed. Because I have no poker face, my reaction—shrugging my shoulders and saying, "Errr, it's okay, I guess"—was the beginning of the end.

He went on to find another writing partner, and I went back to writing alone. In that short time I learned that while it's great to have a similar sensibility, there are many other ingredients



Claudia Johnson and Matt Stevens are co-authors of *Script Partners: What Makes Film & TV Writing Teams Work*

that are just as important to a writing partnership.

A screenwriting partnership is a kind of marriage. It requires relationship skills and the screenwriter's equivalent of a pre-nup to avoid a painful separation.

"It's harder than marriage, because there's no sex," says Claudia Johnson, co-author of *Script Partners: What Makes Film & TV Writing Teams Work*. There are always horror stories—folks suing one another, friendships ended, bad blood boiling up. But the pros can far outweigh the cons. "The biggest advantage of working together is moral support," says Matt Stevens, Johnson's writing partner. "You have somebody by your side and somebody on your side," Johnson adds.

"The great thing about collaboration is that you take out the hardest element of writing, which is isolation," says Joe Stillman, who co-wrote both *Shrek* movies. Because, as Bill Lundy, former chairman of the Screenwriters Network, says, "everything that comes out of your head isn't going to be gold," a partner can bring much needed feedback and perspective.

The key to a successful partnership, say Johnson and Stevens, is to find the right writing partner, which is not as obvious a process as it may seem. "Look among people you know and know well," Johnson advises. "It's easier to work together when

you've worked out the bugs of being together." If you know someone socially, you already know a few important details: do they make you laugh? Do they laugh at your jokes? Can you recover gracefully from a disagreement? Siblings and spouses make good writing teams because they've already established a pattern of interaction.

"We had to share food from day one when it came down the pipe, so we're pretty good at sharing," says Mark Polish, who co-wrote and directed several films with his identical twin brother Michael. The duo are now also co-authors of a new how-to book, *The Declaration of Independent Filmmaking*. "We kind of toss things back and forth—it's almost like a tennis game." (Not sharing properly might look something like that memorable scene in the Polish brothers' *Twin Falls Idaho* (1999), in which conjoined twins attempt to wrestle one another.)

After establishing sensibility and compatibility, there is what Johnson and Stevens call the essential commandment of a screenwriting partnership: "Friendship first." This means valuing the relationship above money and occasionally backing down when a conflict is wreaking havoc. In *Script Partners*, Johnson and Stevens reveal their own guidelines: "defer to whomever is more passionate." One team they interviewed said



Mark and Jay Duplass say they've had almost no disagreements
[photo courtesy of the Duplasses]

they'd transferred all their marital rules over to the writing partnership, including, "Never leave the office angry."

"It's not about turf," says Richard Walter, professor of screenwriting at UCLA's School of Film, Television and Digital Media. "It's not about territory. It's about making the best movie you can make." He adds, "It's not about being generous, either. You want it to be the best movie for your own sake. The point is not to have no ego, but to get into the collective ego that is represented by the movie."

But surrendering to the collective ego is no easy task. As Stillman says, "It's like shiatsu massage: You either give in to it or you scream in pain." You also have to resist the urge to keep score, tallying up who's responsible for which great lines or plot twists. "Once it's in the script, it belongs to the team," says Stevens. "Keep financial tabs; don't keep creative tabs." Even if it's your brilliant idea, Stevens says, "You probably wouldn't have thought of it if it weren't for your partner."

Every member of a screenwriting team will say that mutual respect is the foundation of all healthy partnerships. "You have to compliment each other and complement each other," says Johnson. This means that in addition to heaping your partner with praise, you have to make sure you have compatible writing habits. "There's nothing worse than trying to work with some-

one whose habits are so out of sync with yours," says Lundy.

It's also good to choose someone who has strengths where you have weaknesses and vice versa. The Duplass brothers, whose film *The Puffy Chair* was a hit at Sundance this year, say they've had almost no disagreements, and that's because they balance one another out. "I like to barrel forward. I'm sort of a charging bull," says Mark. While Jay says, "I'm the dude who puts on the brakes."

The way partners work depends not only on the partners themselves, but on the project. Occasionally partners share a space, though rarely the same room. Married screenwriting teams sometimes have offices in the same house. With the Duplass brothers and the Polish brothers, often one person will tackle the first draft, and the other will give notes or revise. Sometimes, after the story is outlined, scenes are divvied up and pasted together later. "If we don't conceive of the idea together, or we're not hot on the same thing at the same time, it's a matter of including each other and getting the other up to speed," says Jay.

One way to maintain partnership bliss is to put your agreement down on paper. "You can say you're friends and you can say nothing will ever come between us, but the minute money gets involved, people change," says Lundy. The Writers Guild of America offers a standard screenwriting collaboration agreement so that you and your partner can be on the same page from the get-go. Ask yourself: Are you partners? Or is one person just giving notes on the other's project? Is one responsible for the story and the other for the screenplay? Your writing relationship needs to be honed, demystified, and put down on paper. This also ensures that the script will be an original one. "Every scriptwriter has some yahoo who says he stole [his or her] idea," says Lundy. "Robert McKee takes credit for every film made in Hollywood, just because they took his class."

Collaboration can also be facilitated by software. One program called Final Draft has a CollaboWriter feature, whereby writers in different locations can instant message notes back and forth while working on the same document. And Movie Magic Screenwriter, perhaps the most popular screenwriting software, has a similar internet collaboration (iPartner) feature, which



Famous indie screenwriting team Alexander Payne and Jim Taylor wrote *Sideways* (pictured above) [photo courtesy Twentieth Century Fox]

connects disparate computers via internet, turning the machines into virtual phones. "This pretty much takes out the distance between [partners]," says Chris Huntley, vice president of Write Brothers, which produces the software.

Animation features like *Shrek* are perhaps the most collaborative projects—storyboard artists often rewrite passages or sketch out plotlines, becoming de facto screenwriters. But this, like a more traditional partnership, can balance strengths and weaknesses. "Storyboard artists are great at finishing moments and finding tidbits to define character and beginning to unfold plot," says Stillman. "You still need somebody who takes in the big picture and can not only track to story, but can bring further background to the characters."

For screenwriting partners in Hollywood, partnership is not just an emotional and temporal investment, it's a vocational commitment. In the studio system, once you start selling screenplays as a team, you are known that way and even paid that way. "Studios like it because they get two brains for the price of one," says Lundy. "You're considered to be one writer," says Stillman. "If the writers split up, it's going to be much, much harder to get work."

Studio collaborations in general can be quite different from partnerships formed in the independent world. Writers often work in teams-for-hire rather than forming their own team, and very often other folks will poke their noses into your creations; it's less about personal vision than group vision.

"I compare it to restaurants," says Polish, who has worked as a writer-for-hire on studio scripts in addition to his collaborations with his brother. "You're trying to feed a lot of people, trying to find the taste of a lot of people. Independent film is more like a specific cuisine: You can appeal to particular tastes."

Although some claim collaboration is less common in the independent world, where the auteur mentality reigns, there are certainly examples of great indie teams: *Sideways*' (2004) Alexander Payne and Jim Taylor, the Polish brothers, Joel and Ethan Coen (*The Big Lebowski*, 1998; *Fargo*, 1996). Many of these teams try to stay together after a box office success. For the Duplass brothers, who are on the verge of hitting the big time, protecting their collaboration is top priority. "We're really into creating a Duplass brothers stamp on our style," says Mark. "Everything is discussed between the two of us. Everything is conceived and visualized by both of us. We're interested in staying together."

The Duplass partnership is enviable. In fact, the more I talked to all of these great teams, the more I longed for a scriptwriting partner. I'm even tempted to take out an ad myself (anyone?) or try to ingratiate myself to the television fellow (he is now a close friend even though he doesn't want me scribbling on his pilot script). As Polish points out, "Collaboration will always take you to a higher level than what your singular vision would be." ★



Director/producer/co-writer Michael Polish and producer/co-writer/actor Mark Polish at the Sundance 2003 *Northfork* premiere [photo by George Pimentel/WireImage.com]



Interactive television—mother and son appreciate the same programming from different locations
[drawing by Erica Berenstein]

Storytelling in the Digital Age

BY DAVID ALM

Shortly after Jean-Luc Godard released *Breathless* in 1960, an exasperated journalist said to the young director: "Surely you think that a film should have a beginning, middle, and end."

"Yes," Godard replied after a moment, "but not necessarily in that order." Those words not only launched the French New Wave but have since inspired thousands of young directors to reject traditional plot devices.

Now, for better or for worse, Godard's enigmatic response has become even further complicated by the increasingly pervasive use of digital technology—which may be the demise of storytelling as we know it. With interactive websites and DVDs, TiVo, and elaborate computer games, the art of patiently allowing a tale to unfold is starting to seem antiquated.

According to Marcia Zellers, director of the Digital Content Lab at the American Film Institute in Los Angeles, whether or not these new technologies will fundamentally change our concept of "story" is "the toughest nut to crack. We haven't really figured that out yet."

The Digital Content Lab was established in the late 1990s to prepare for the so-called "digital revolution" and to insure that new technologies advanced—rather than hindered—the art of storytelling. "Our primary mission here is to be the torchbearers for great

entertainment," Zellers says. "And to make sure there is a voice for storytellers in the digital world. But in the digital world, all aspects of the business—from technology to business to creative—are all so complexly interwoven that we have a lot of dialogue around all those things."

The transformation caused by this digital revolution will, according to Zellers, be far more complicated than any that have come before. "When films went from silent to talkie, the revolution happened in one night, it happened one time, and everyone had to figure out how to deal with it." The digital revolution, on the other hand, has been developing for 20 years. "It's going to be sort of a slow rollover, but I think the eventual impact on our society is probably going to be a lot more profound than when movies went from black and white to color, or when we went from radio to television."

Major changes include the disempowerment of big TV networks and studios that monopolize the airwaves. "For many years a lot of us were operating under the assumption that because television was the dominant medium, the television monitor would be the place where we'd first see widespread interactivity," she says. "And as years went by, it became clear that that's not necessarily the case."



Marcia Zellers is the director of the AFI Digital Content Lab (photo courtesy of AFI)

Louis Alvarez and Andrew Kolker, founding partners of The Center for New American Media, a New York-based documentary production studio known for irreverent but socially minded TV documentaries like *American Tongues* (1987) and *People Like Us: Social Class in America* (2001), were among the first to explore the possibilities of interactive TV—and to realize its limitations: You can only have two font sizes, your project has to be compatible with multiple cable providers, and you have to assume that most people don't have a TV with a keyboard attached to it.

"With interactive television, you have to do a version that works for the people who have interactivity, but then you also have to do a version for the people who don't," Alvarez notes. "And they're all watching the same broadcast. If it goes on at 8pm on Wednesday night, and my mother has her old 15-inch set, she's got to be able to watch the film, and it has to make sense to her. But then my brother, who's Mr. Early Adopter, wants to get the interactive stuff going—and he's watching the same film. If we have all this interactive stuff on the screen impeding on the regular film, no one's going to have the experience of just watching the film."

Most digital content producers, however, are bypassing this problem by developing content for cell phones, computers, PDAs—media that exists in a more customized, personal space. With such individualized programming, the social currency that film and television provide could be lost and viewing could become a thoroughly isolating activity. But this issue seems to be less important than the more immediate financial ramifications. "The bottom line is the bottom line," says Tim Shey, co-founder of Proteus, an interactive media development firm based in Washington, D.C. "It's absolutely revenue, the return on your investment. And there's no mistaking that the main-

stream networks and content producers are looking at digital media as a means to improve and sustain their business. They're seeing the fragmentation of their audience and the big three networks aren't the big three networks anymore. They're still the most watched channels, but they've also seen an erosion of their audiences because of things like cable, the internet, and games. So they see it as almost essential to their ongoing business."

Moreover, when users are able to interact with and even manipulate digital programming, the very distinction between creation and consumption becomes fuzzier—and may eventually be altogether moot.

Take Machinima, a growing trend among gamers in which people manipulate video games to create short films, using the game itself as raw material for characters and sets. Players around the world can collaborate on a project: One person may control the "camera angles," another may write the script, and another may do the casting. The results can be anywhere from silly to ingenious. In one Machinima-made movie, two soldiers in full combat gear from the game *Halo* engage in a long, philosophical debate à la *My Dinner with Andre* (1981). In another, the video game version of *The Matrix* is used to create new sequels for the original film— humorously, of course.

"Who creates these stories?" Shey asks. "Is it the game designers, just by creating that universe and those capabilities? Or is it the players/auteurs who are finding new ways of using that technology? [Players] have this almost unprecedented opportunity. They've got this virtual world they can go into, they've got actors, they've got camera angles. One of them can jump up onto the top of a jeep and you can have a shot looking down. It's almost hard to explain unless you can actually see it, and that's happening to a lot of the virtual worlds that are out there now."

But who *is* the author in this digital age, and will those who were previously revered for their ability to weave a brilliant yarn be replaced by anyone with broadband and a cell phone?

"I think the reverence for auteurship is always going to be with us," Zellers says. "It goes back to the desire to be told a great story. If we could all do it, there'd be no desire to revere those folks. It's a unique and special talent just like any unique and special talent."

She adds that digital media simply opens the playing field to other players and, therefore, to new kinds of stories. "[Auteur-driven content] is just going to be supplemented by other things," she says. "So probably the person who has the greatest talent for weaving a well-crafted story will always remain at the top of the heap in terms of people's reverence, but other people who figure out how to do really interesting things with these new media, and who figure out ways to create new experiences and new buzz words and new things that enter the lexicon, will be revered for different reasons."

One analogy might be Turntablism: the art of scratching records to create radically new sounds and rhythms from other people's music. Scratching has plenty of detractors, and surely trends like Machinima will too as they become more widespread. But what major artistic development hasn't known its share of dissent?

"People have been proclaiming the death of the novel and the death of film practically since they were invented," She reminds us. "But I think there will always be a place for the novel or film as we know them." He quickly adds that so-called "new media" do not necessarily avail revolutionary new ways of telling a story. "It's nothing new for media to be intertextual or interactive," he says. "A lot of the best novels require a great deal of user-participation, or user-interpretation. And a lot of people will say that novels exist somewhere between what's on



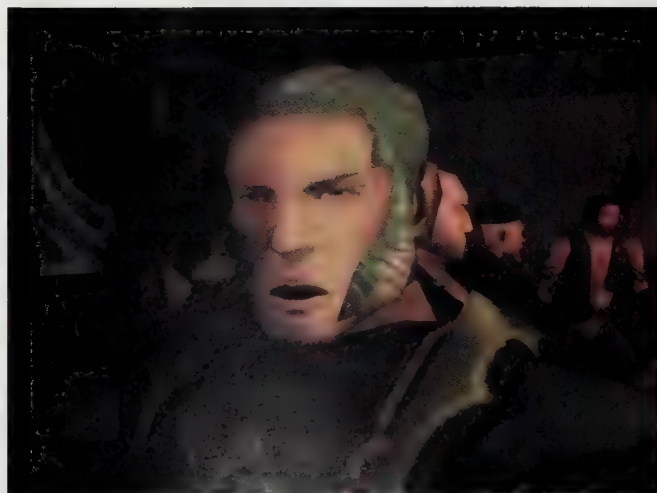
Machinima's "Eschaton"
[photo courtesy Hugh Hancock/Strange Company]



Machinima's version of *The Matrix*
[photo courtesy Hugh Hancock/Strange Company]



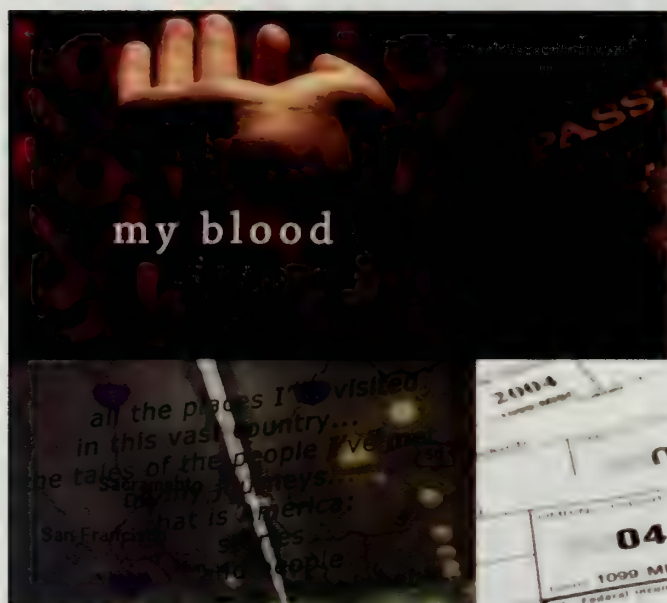
Halo's soldiers (above) engage in a philosophical debate in a Machinima-made movie



Machinima's "Bloodspell"
[photo courtesy Hugh Hancock/Strange Company]



(Above) Mariam Ghani, a Brooklyn-based new media artist, and one of her projects (below) [photos courtesy of Ghani]



the page and the imagination of the person reading it. The same can be said for a good movie or television show."

The big difference, he adds, is that "[digital storytelling] can be much more immersing, and it can involve the viewer or the reader so much more. And there are a lot more possibilities once you add that element of network, community, connectivity."

This may be true. After all, digital media allow niche markets across the globe to meet in virtual environments in real time, which could increase democratic content and mitigate isolation (albeit through chat rooms and instant-message discussions, not over a cup of coffee near your local cinema).

Of course, whether they work in digital or more traditional

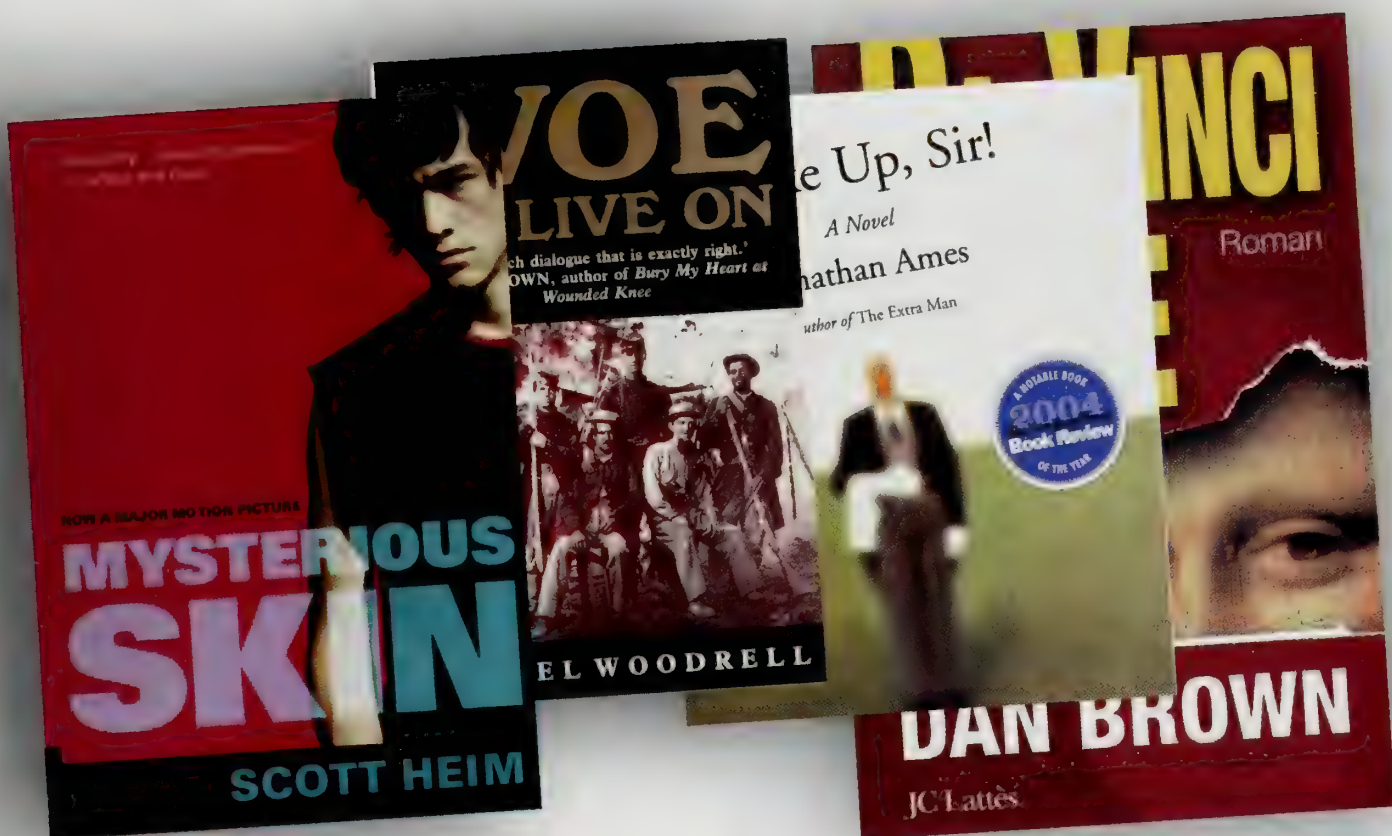
media, not all storytellers are commercially driven. Digital technology also facilitates new forms of art-making, allowing artists to explore narrative strategies in unprecedented ways. Mariam Ghani, a Brooklyn-based new media artist whose projects often incorporate video, websites, museum installations, reading libraries, and even chat-room discussions with the artist, examines the very concepts of "narration" and "reception" at a fundamental level.

"I tend to think of the raw material of my stories as a database, and the different ways that I present it as a set of interfaces that offer different entry points into the material for different audiences," Ghani says. She invests her audiences with considerable authorial control, thereby diminishing her own role as "director."

"When I first began working with video, I came to it from the tradition of experimental documentary, which seems very much inflected by the 'I' of the filmmaker," says Ghani, who received her MFA in photography, video and related media from the School of Visual Arts in Manhattan. "But as I moved into the art world, and shifted into a practice that's grounded more and more in new media, I became less interested in making work that reflects my life or my stories, and more interested in making projects where I give voice to the stories of others—creating systems for people to speak, or translating their speech into mediums or sites where they are usually voiceless."

She adds, however, that even this is not entirely in her control. "It's actually up to the viewers how much narrative agency they want to appropriate for themselves," she says.

"It really becomes an individual choice," explains Ghani, summing up one of the pivotal points in the digital storytelling discussion. "Will you engage, or will you be just an observer?" ★



BY ELIZABETH ANGELL

Scott Heim's 1995 novel, *Mysterious Skin*, makes for an unlikely film. The story of two eight-year-olds from Kansas who are sexually molested by their little league coach is dark and sad, rife with poignant and haunting detail. To cope, one boy imagines that he was abducted by a UFO and lost five hours of his life; the other becomes a gay prostitute who remains drawn to the sexual predator who abused him. When Heim first set about the task of writing a screenplay version of his acclaimed book, he excised many of the most difficult episodes. "I just wasn't sure how a film could depict children in some of the book's dramatic situations," he says.

But it wasn't Heim's rendering that eventually made it to the screen last summer. His script, like so many other author-driven adaptations, languished in development limbo for seven years until writer/director Gregg Araki got involved. He had long been a fan of the book, and he and Heim struck up a friendship. In 2003, Araki and producer Mary Jane Skalski reacquired the book's option, and Araki himself wrote the screenplay. It was a much more dutiful adaptation.

"Gregg's script is closer to my novel than mine was," says Heim. "He stayed very faithful to the story and the atmosphere in the book, to my descriptions of settings, of interiors, and char-

Turning Books into Scripts

Independents do it differently

acters' clothes and hairstyles and idiosyncrasies and all that."

And the film, while not explicit in its depiction of what happens to the two boys, pulls no punches. One almost hopes to see a disclaimer during the credits: "No children were harmed in the making of this film." Araki gave each of his youngest actors a specially edited script and through careful editing and block-

ing, he shielded them from the film's most disturbing elements. Still, the audience experiences a frank and nuanced portrayal of their encounters with a pedophile.

"I wasn't sure how [someone] could film a lot of the scenes in the book," says Heim. "But Gregg, as a filmmaker and a really expert editor, figured out a way to present the film so that the audience certainly thinks they're seeing things that they actually aren't."

The adaptation of *Mysterious Skin* is a blueprint for how independent producers and directors transform a novel into a film: It proceeded slowly in fits and starts and was ultimately driven to theaters by the engine of a writer/director who cared passionately about the book and producers willing to take a chance on difficult or risky material.

To be sure, adaptations are popular with both indies and studios. Books often have a built-in following, they are useful



sales tools when pitching a project to financiers or executives, and they contain a more complete and finely drawn world than most screenplays offer.

Studios, of course, Hoover up all the "sure things": the *Harry Potters*, *Seabiscuits*, and *Da Vinci Codes*. They also frequently have book scouts and executives whose job it is to seek out likely properties and secure them. They can afford to buy dozens of options and pay to keep them alive for years at a time. Indies, in contrast, almost never have the budget for that kind of long-term investment.

"I don't call up publishers and see what's new that's coming out, which producers with more financing might do," says



Keanu Reeves (left) in *Thumbsucker*, which was based on Walter Kirn's 1999 novel and directed by Mike Mills (above) [photos courtesy of Sony Picture Classics]

Skalski, who produced *The Station Agent* (2003), among others, for New York's Antidote Films. "But books are seductive and you kind of can't help thinking about what kind of films they would make."

And though the average *Variety* reader might have reason to believe that the movie rights to every novel are snapped up immediately for mind-boggling sums, agents and producers maintain that there is plenty of material available to independent producers.

"I certainly do big movies, but as time goes on, adult movies are of less and less interest to studios," says Ron Bernstein, a well-known agent with ICM in Los Angeles, who is presumably speaking of grown-up fare like *Sideways* (2004), not *Debbie Does Dallas*. "You take a book where it's wanted."

Indeed, book deals illuminate the almost completely divergent business models of studio and independently financed projects. "The studios are risk averse; independents like risky," says Bernstein. "That's what gets their audience into the theaters. If you've got something dangerous, studios don't want it. If it's off-beat, eccentric, oddball—that's all for the independents."

Independent producers also frequently mine books, like *Mysterious Skin*, that may not be hot off the presses. Heim's novel took a decade to go from the page to the screen. "There are many good books out there that people have forgotten because they're not in the public eye," says Anne Carey of This Is That Productions in New York who, along with her partner Ted Hope, has produced a number of literary adaptations, including the September release *Thumbsucker*, based on Walter



(back row) Writer Scott Heim, director Gregg Araki, actors: Brady Corbet (front row) Jeff Licon, Elisabeth Shue, Joseph Gordon-Levitt and Michelle Trachtenberg at the 2005 Sundance Film Festival screening of *Mysterious Skin* [photo by Jeff Vespa/WireImage.com]

Kirn's 1999 novel, and last year's *The Door in the Floor*, which was based on John Irving's *A Widow for One Year*.

Literary agent Rosalie Siegel agrees. "I'm getting options for books that weren't published this year," she says. "At any given time, I might be brokering for books two, five, even ten years after publication. It's just a question of being tenacious and aggressive about submitting books."

As seductive as a novel might be to a filmmaker, producers are usually wary of deals that hinge upon buying book rights, because an option adds an expense line to an already tight budget. Options become more expensive each year, and a producer must factor that variable into the amount of time he or she devotes to developing a project. "You've got a ticking clock for how long you're going to control [the rights]," says Skalski. "You're constantly aware that if you don't get it out soon enough, you may run out of time. That's a lot of pressure."

As a result, indie producers usually wait for the project to come to them. The right writer and director are crucial to putting a deal together. "A studio will option a book because they think it's a good property and then they'll find a writer and then a director," says Carey. "I can't really think of a situation in which we would option a book if we didn't have a filmmaking partner to work with. [Putting a film together is] an expensive and lengthy process. And when you develop for a filmmaker, you have a point of view and a commitment. They'll work on it 'till they get it right."

When there isn't ample money in the budget, having a team

in place—and not just a keen interest in an author's work—can help in wooing a writer. "It gives us the ability to go to the agent and the author and say, 'We have a particular filmmaker who's made these films and has this vision,'" says Carey. "That has proven to be a successful formula for us."

Knowing the "team" is of paramount importance to many writers because when they sell the rights, they relinquish control of something that had previously been entirely their creation. "It's my job to investigate the deal for my clients," says Siegel. "I get as much information as I can about who they are, who's going to finance it, what their ideas are. Authors don't have creative control, so we try to get every bit of information we can."

Heim, who had invested several years of his own career into a film version of *Mysterious Skin*, ultimately turned the reigns over to Araki because he believed in the filmmaker's vision. As Araki notes on the *Mysterious Skin* website, the movie is his first book adaptation and he was drawn to the story because of Heim's skill as a writer. "It's really the only piece of material I've ever encountered that I've felt passionate and excited enough about to devote years of my life to making," he writes.

"Everyone signed on to the project because they believed in, and were moved or excited by, the story," says Heim. That was also the reason he was happy with the project, despite the fact that it was not particularly lucrative. "That's a very different experience from a huge studio blockbuster, where often, I think, the cast or crew pretty much know going in that it's not going to be anything close to a work of art, but the paycheck is going to be big."



Julian Fellowes (right) co-wrote the adapted screenplay of *Vanity Fair*, which was directed by Mira Nair (left) [photo courtesy of Focus Features]

Heim is not alone. "There are plenty of people who would rather have their book made into a good movie rather than getting a lot of money up front and being embarrassed by what's made of their work," says Carey.

Once a producer has made a commitment to a book project and put a team together, the book becomes an invaluable tool. It can help with everything from financing to production and promotion. "I think people like the idea of a movie based on a book," says Skalski of pitching the film to money men. "It can help make a script seem more weighty or prestigious."

Perhaps the book's most useful aspect is as a resource for the filmmaker. It is like a manual for the world of the film, much more detailed than any screenplay could ever be. "You can always go back to it and reread it," says Carey. "You can give it to the production designer, you can give it to the [director of photography], to the costume designer, to the actors. It gives a lot of depth that screenplays, by their nature, can't give."

The film, in turn, can reincarnate the book, introducing it to a whole new audience. It is not unusual to see repackaged paperback editions of books made into movies. William Makepeace Thackeray's *Vanity Fair* was published complete with a picture of Reese Witherspoon on the cover in time for Mira Nair's 2004 adaptation. When Carey worked on Ang Lee's *Ride with the Devil* (1999), she noted that the publisher reissued Daniel Woodrell's *Woe to Live On* the novel on which it was based. The novel had gone out of print, but after the movie it found new life.

"It's terrific publicity for the book," says Siegel, who relishes the opportunity to leverage a film deal into new foreign rights or a new paperback deal for her clients.

Occasionally, publicists try the reverse process as well, ginning up a novelization of a film as a tie-in and promotional device. Miramax tried it a few years ago when they launched their book division. *The Pallbearer*, among other titles, made it

to shelves. Novelist Jonathan Ames adapted MTV films' *200 Cigarettes* for that company's book division. He did it without seeing the film, he says, and it took him 17 days. "[I made] the plot a little more logical, adding thoughts to the characters, and I wrote it in the third person, which I had never done in my own work." There are few examples of this phenomenon outside of science fiction franchises, however, which

suggests other marketing tools have fared better.

Ultimately, filmmakers all face the same tricky task in adapting a book, be it *Ride with the Devil* or the *Da Vinci Code*. Whether the novel's fan base sells more movie tickets or the film moves paperbacks off the shelves, a writer and director's biggest challenge remains translating the written word into the moving image.

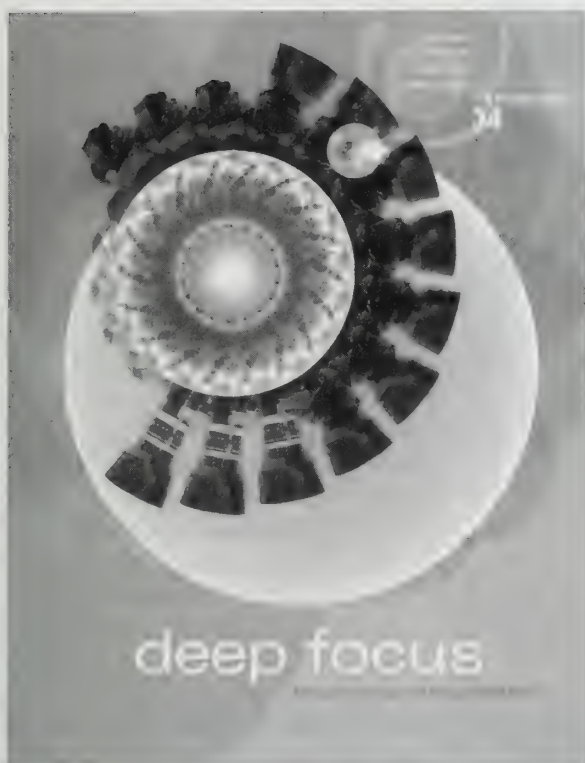
"In a book, you have access to the internal monologues, to the internal thoughts of the characters," says actor and screenwriter Clark Gregg, who recently adapted a novel by a well-known author.

It's hard to resist the urge to incorporate the language of the book into the screenplay. "A lot of times, if there's a narrator or it's written in the first person, it's extremely tempting to keep that voice, especially if it's good writing," says Gregg. That's a pitfall, he notes, since a narrator's voice tends to distance the audience and bring them out of the experience of watching a movie.

"With screenplays, so much depends on the actors taking this thinner version of the story and really bringing it to life," says Ames, who has also adapted his own novel, *Wake Up, Sir!*, for Ben Stiller's company, Red Hour Films. "[They must convey] the pages of explanation that might have been in the novel with just the look of weariness in their face."

For his part, Araki made use of more cinematic tools to bring Heim's words to the screen. "Because the subject matter is so dark, I wanted the film to be incredibly beautiful and lush, the cinematic equivalent of the poetic language used in the novel," he writes.

To know whether it worked, you'll probably have to read the book and see the movie for yourself. No word yet on which should come first. ★



POLITICS and POLICY in *DEEP FOCUS*

A new report examines the future of independent filmmaking

By Matt Dunne

During last year's heated presidential debates, hundreds of thousands of web-savvy Americans saw Will Ferrell impersonate George W. Bush flubbing takes of a campaign ad at his Texas ranch. *Straight Talk*, the four-minute, low-budget film, quickly became the subject of conversation among millions, both politically-attuned as well as disengaged viewers. The piece inspired political discussion blogs; conservative groups derided it on prime-time talk

shows. But despite its wide-ranging impact, the short was never shown in a theater nor made into a DVD for distribution. Distributed online and funded by the political action group America Coming Together (ACT), *Straight Talk* and similar projects that utilize alternative distribution networks may just represent the future of independent media.

At least this is the notion proposed by *Deep Focus, A Report on the Future of Independent Media*, written by Andrew



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Blau and produced by the National Alliance for Media Arts and Culture. The book provides a rare, in-depth look at the future of independent film, a future neither bright nor bleak, but fundamentally different from its past. Rather than talk exclusively to people inside the indie community—who are undoubtedly too close to see the big picture—Blau interviewed futurists in marketing, sociology, technology, politics, and media, including practitioners and academics who study trends in independent media. Blau's team also discussed the future of independent filmmaking with the leaders of Bay Area-based independent media organizations. The report concludes that there are two major forces that will determine the future of independent film: the use of the medium (both production and distribution), and the social and political culture in the United States.

According to *Deep Focus*, broadband will become the standard mechanism for motion media distribution, just as the distribution of text and images has become largely electronic. Barriers to entry are incredibly low in the broadband world, particularly compared with traditional distribution methods. Amateurs will be able to deliver content to a massive audience and as a result, the production costs will plummet and the amount of total motion media in existence will increase exponentially. Also, people will be able to customize their viewing, no longer limited by what the film house, video store, or cable company offers.

Distribution's evolution depends on the increasingly politicized questions of broadband access. In rural America, the fight for access is ongoing, and there are battles over availability in urban areas, as well. Backed by the current administration, the courts have continued to protect the right of utilities to exclude other providers. No other company can use the Broadband infrastructure to deliver independent or less expensive content. With the evolution of wireless technology, the FCC has prevented deployment by continuing to support private ownership of the particular frequency spectrum necessary for new providers to enter a market. Now cities that have

According to *Deep Focus*, broadband will become the standard mechanism for motion media distribution, just as the distribution of text and images has become largely electronic... people will be able to customize their viewing, no longer limited by what the film house, video store, or cable company offers.

responded to expensive or poorly serviced internet providers by installing public broadband are being attacked by cable companies. If internet access becomes consolidated, the realization of this open marketplace of ideas and direct commerce could come to a screeching halt.

The *Deep Focus* report also suggests that the ability to customize what we consume, combined with increased political polarization, could lead to the creation of more overtly political independent films. The recent financial success of

political documentaries like *Bowling For Columbine* (2002), *Fahrenheit 9/11* (2004), *Super Size Me* (2004) and *Control Room* (2004) suggest a trend in that direction. *Outfoxed: Rupert Murdoch's War on Journalism* (2004), which started as a DVD sold largely through Amazon, later made the reverse jump to a major distribution deal, suggesting what may happen when more films go directly to audiences. Furthermore, the international interest in United States politics and the ubiquitous

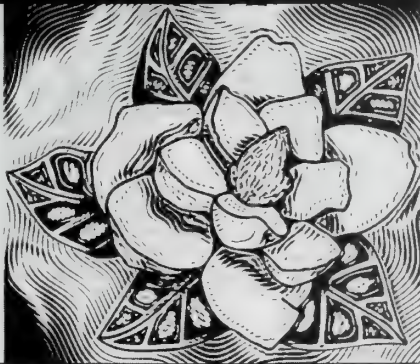
nature of the internet could create larger audiences at an even faster pace. Websites that serve as convening locations for like-minded individuals could produce even more sophisticated channels for distribution. MoveOn.org's promotion of *Fahrenheit 9/11* is a good example of the merger between distribution and advocacy groups not bound by geography.

But *Straight Talk* is different. No one paid to see it. In fact, ACT, which paid for the full production of the piece, used its website to make it easier for more peo-

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TRUTH IN MOTION: A RETROSPECTIVE OF KARTEMQUIN FILMS

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 27, 7PM
Thumbs Down (1968, EXCERPT)
Hum 255 (1969)
Trick Bag (1974)
New Americans (2004, EXCERPT)

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 3, 7PM
Home for Life (1967)
Chicago Maternity Center Story (1976)
HSA Strike 75 (1975, EXCERPT)
Refrigerator Mothers (2002)

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 10, 7PM
Taylor Chain 1: A Story in a Union Local (1981)
The Last Pullman Car (1983)
What's Happening at Local 70 (1975)

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 11, 8PM*
Golub: Late Works are the Catastrophes (2004)

SATURDAY, NOV. 12, 10AM-12PM*
Master Class with Jerry Blumenthal and Gordon Quinn, founders of Kartemquin Films

SATURDAY, NOV. 12, 1:30PM-3PM*
PANEL: Truth in Motion: Documentary Film in the United States with Miriam Hansen (University of Chicago), Tom Gunning (University of Chicago), Stuart Klawans (The Nation), and Bill Nichols (San Francisco State University)

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ple to view it for free. Today, film revenue is directly linked to viewership which is directly linked to delivery of message. Blau posits that future socio-political success of films may be completely separate from viewer-related sales.

He also suggests the independent film community consider "reorganizing funding streams." Although government entities have become less willing to support independent film, the cost of distribution and production is falling, which may lead to an increase in foundations and organizations that are willing to fund projects. There may be an alignment between the film industry and a new generation of dot-com-generated wealth: Individuals may be more interested in underwriting entire projects since a smaller amount of money can cover a larger portion of the cost. Case in point: eBay co-founder Jeff Skoll recently created a development company to produce socially relevant, commercially viable films.

These economics may also lead to more political interest group-funded projects. ACT would not have spent mil-

lions of dollars buying minutes of prime-time television for a piece aimed at a demographic which is historically unlikely to vote, but they would put it online for free. As a result, the film didn't have to conform to conventional lengths—it was shorter than a full-length but longer than a 30-second spot.

Similarly, MoveOn.org was willing to underwrite *Uncovered: The War in Iraq* (2004), a film that documented evidence that the Bush administration wanted to go war with Iraq immediately following 9/11. The distribution effort started with house parties convened by MoveOn.org where volunteers watched the film as a group, not a great sales model, but the buzz from this effort eventually led a distributor to send the piece out through the usual markets. Imagine if technology had evolved to the point where a long piece could be easily streamed over the internet for free. *The Deep Focus* report suggests that such experiments could lead to a more investors willing to give more in order to produce wider content.

Though an increase in films funded by political organizations could fuel the

indie industry, it also gives us pause. With public and traditional foundation resources, filmmakers have generally felt free to follow their own artistic or political visions. In this new world of individual or interest group-funded projects, where much of the risk is covered upfront, there may be a propensity to write the film to the interests of the sponsor. Will Ferrell's most awkward moment in *Straight Talk* is when he makes the blatant pitch for ACT, almost undermining the power of the entire piece.

The future of independent filmmaking might still seem uncertain, but *Deep Focus* succeeds in posing thoughtful questions to a diverse range of experts. The report proves that policy decisions, particularly those related to broadband access, will be critical in the near future, and that politics in general have the potential to drive the relevance—and potentially the economic model—of independent film into the next decade. ★

The report is available at www.namac.org.

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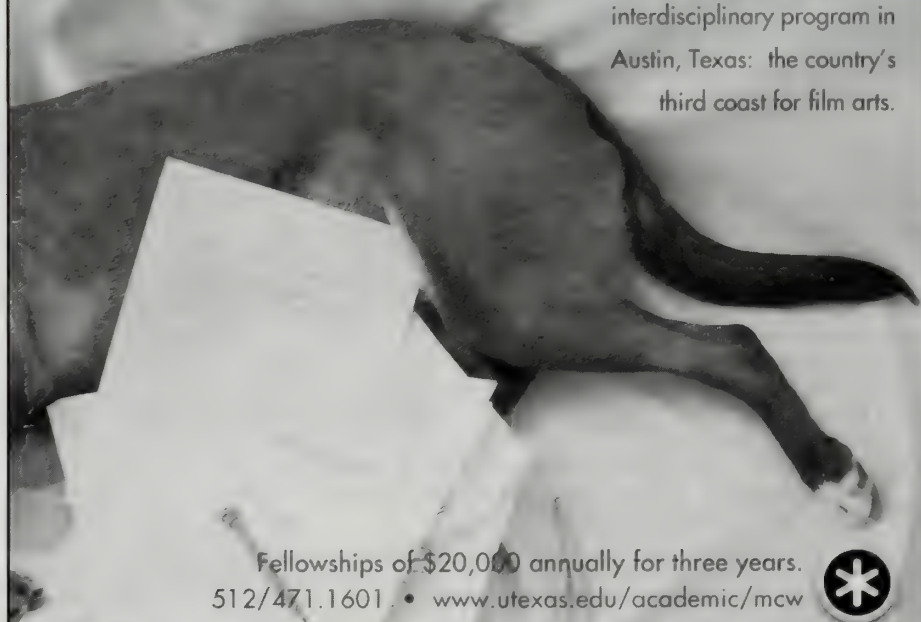
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What Rolled Up Must Come Down

By Fernando Ramirez

Written by? Created by? Screenplay by?

Screen credit can define a writer's career—in fact, the exact words that rolled up the screen after his/her last project often determines a writer's next gig and salary. Given the time and high stakes involved in writing for film and television, especially when little compensation is involved, credit becomes one of the most important parts of the contract—perhaps more than any other clause. As a result, the terms are often complicated and heavily negotiated.

The Writers Guild of America (WGA) has had the right to determine screenwriting credit since its first collective bargaining agreement with a Hollywood studio in 1942. The WGA created a Minimum Basic Agreement in part to prevent what was becoming a common trend in Hollywood: studio executives offering writer credits in exchange for favors from company secretaries, relatives, and friends who had little or nothing to do with the project. The WGA agreement is still used by most professional screenwriters to prevent producers or studios from subjectively deciding

A legal guide to screenwriting credits

what type of credit to assign, how the credit will appear on screen, its place in the sequence of credits, and its appearance in ads, publicity materials, and other company displays of credits.

According to the agreement, the production company has to send the WGA and the writer(s) a tentative proposal of the writing credits with a copy of the final script. If the writer disagrees with the proposal, he or she can protest in writing. If the production company and the writer can't come to an agreement, the WGA serves as an arbitrator and makes a determination. If a writer disagrees with the WGA's final determination, the writer must challenge it through the courts. However, in most high-profile cases in which writers have challenged screen credits, the courts have agreed with the WGA's final determination.

One such case occurred during the making of *Beverly Hills Cop II* (1987). Paramount Pictures hired a screenwriter to draft the script, but after the film was completed, the WGA determined that this writer should share "Screenplay by"

credit with another writer, and that a "Story by" credit could go to Eddie Murphy. The original writer then sued the WGA in the California courts, claiming he alone deserved both "Screenplay by" and "Story by" credit. The courts found in favor of the WGA.

Even if the project is not WGA—either because the writer is not a WGA member or the filmmaker's company is not a WGA signatory (essentially a producer who agrees to abide by WGA rules)—a similar notice and approval requirement (such as the one below) can be inserted into the agreement.

"Before the screen credits for screen authorship are finally determined, the Production Company will send a written notice to each writer who is a substantial contributor to the screenplay. This notice will state the Production Company's choice of credits on a tentative basis, together with the names of the other substantial contributors and their addresses last known to the Production Company."

If using WGA agreement terms becomes complicated or tedious, a writer can demand that credit be accorded to him/her per the WGA

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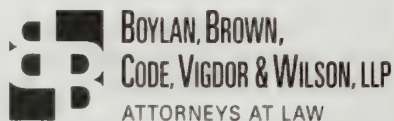
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Wrote, produced and sold a feature length comedy.

Film production counsel to independent filmmakers.

Municipal counsel on Woodstock '99.

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Minimum Basic Agreement, as stated below:

"Producer agrees that the Writer's credits shall be determined and accorded pursuant to the provisions of the WGA Agreement in effect at the time of such determination."

All screenwriters should be familiar with the following, often non-negotiable, terms and issues in order to assure that they get the greatest and fairest recognition for their work.

WRITTEN BY: The writer created the story concept and wrote the screenplay.

STORY BY: The writer created the story (i.e., the plot, theme, main characters, etc.).

SCREENPLAY BY: The writer wrote the screenplay based on someone else's concept.

TELEPLAY BY: Writer wrote the script for a television program based on someone else's concept.

CREATED BY: Typically designated as credit for the creators of television programs, where bonuses and royalties for episodes are involved, and the show's success will determine if co-creators can become an executive.

ON SCREEN PLACEMENT: Generally, the writer's screen credit should be placed next to the director's credit. If the writing credits are in the main titles (i.e. before the film starts), they appear on a title card immediately preceding the card on which the director's credit appears. If the writing credits appear in the end titles (i.e. before the film ends), they appear immediately following the director's credit.

PAID ADVERTISING: The WGA generally requires writer credits to appear in advertising and publicity on par with the director and producer credit.

SIZE OF CREDIT: The writer's credit should be equal in size and type to any other credit.

MERCHANDISE: Credit on merchandising items in connection with the film—such as soundtrack liner notes and/or DVD packaging—should bear the writer's credit.

ADDITIONAL WRITERS: It is not uncommon for a number of different writers to revise a script. The writer's agreement should limit the number of individual writers who may receive credit to a maximum of two or three. This is especially important in the event that the writer is entitled to a bonus based on a sole "Screenplay by," "Teleplay by," and/or "Created by" credit.

STUDIO OR PRODUCTION EXECUTIVES: In order to preempt the practice or temptation of any abuse of screenplay credits, production executives are usually excluded from screenplay credit unless the executives wrote the screenplay exclusively by themselves.

MOST FAVORED NATIONS: If the agreement is not subject to WGA rules, the writer could use a "most favored nations" clause stipulating that if another individual or company involved with the project (i.e., writer, director, producer) gets a more favorable credit term in their agreement (larger, bolder, longer on-screen duration, main title, end title, etc.), then the writer will automatically be entitled to those same credit terms.

INJUNCTIVE RELIEF: An injunction by a writer against a production company or studio could halt production, distribution and/or exhibition of the film. To avoid that from happening due to a producer's inadvertent failure to grant the writer his or her credit as stipulated in the agreement, producers should include a clause with language such as:

"No casual or inadvertent failure by the Producer to comply with the terms of this section or any other clause in connection with Writer's credit herein stipulated, shall be deemed a breach of contract, or entitle Writer to injunctive relief."

More information at www.wga.org. ★

ASK

the Documentary Doctor

By Fernanda Rossi



Dear Doc Doctor:

Nobody seems to like my film—they say it's unclear and hard to follow. Why aren't they getting the story?

If people are "not liking your story," you have to accept it. If people are "not getting your story," you have to work on it. Knowing the difference... as priceless as a packed theatre.

It's tempting to think that the reason somebody didn't like your film was because he/she didn't get it. It's easier to dismiss this kind of critique than to make changes to your documentary. Others might argue that if nobody gets it, it's because you're ahead of your time, which is possible, but not as common as we'd like to think. As filmmakers, we are responsible for the entire process of communication, from delivery of the story or message, to the audience's understanding and appreciation of that story. In other words, if for any reason nobody "gets it," you have work to do.

Let's define "nobody." How many nobodies are we talking about? Is it many people in a badly-targeted test screening, or just one person, but one you really care about? Knowing the demographics of your unenthusiastic audience can help you assess the problem— or figure out if you're just miscalculating prospective viewers.

Here's an experiment: Choose three consecutive scenes in your documentary. Write down the objective of each scene. Ask someone who is your ideal viewer to define the main points of those scenes, and check his/her answers against your notes.

If your objective in each scene is not clear, audiences are left to pick and

choose what to follow in the story. This mistake over the course of a 90-minute film amounts to a significant cumulative error. Audiences will eventually fall asleep, walk out, or feel anxious about figuring out the story.

Repeating the exercise above for all the scenes in the film can help you identify why and where the objective is not coming through in each scene. Are you giving too much on-camera time to a secondary character? Are lesser issues conveyed in a more memorable manner than the main issues? Once each scene's objective is loud and clear, you can check the order of those scenes. Some shuffling might be needed. Do another test screening and enjoy the difference!

Dear Doc Doctor:

I have a lot of ideas for a documentary—how do I decide which idea to go with, and how do I develop a story out of that idea?

Choosing which ideas to pursue and



which stories to tell is where all film-making starts. You have a very important decision ahead of you so before you pull out the latest box office numbers and make vector calculations of the future, I recommend you test your passion.

Write down all your ideas on separate index cards. Lay them out on the floor and build a pyramid, with the idea that you like the most at the very top. Try to imagine which one of these ideas you would enjoy thinking about, shooting, and editing every day for the next (at least) three years. An idea that intrigues and amazes you will do the same for your audience.

While shuffling your cards, you may be happy to discover that ideas for different films are actually just different angles of the same overall concept. Feel free to redo the cards to illustrate these changes.

After you decide on one or two ideas, ask yourself if these ideas can evolve into stories. And can those stories in turn be told with images and sound? Since film-making is such an expensive and time-consuming form, you have to be really sure that the story is worth telling in this medium.

To check for story development potential, ask yourself as many questions as possible about each idea. If you run out of ink and paper, then there is enough material for a film. Next take imaginary photographs of your imaginary story. Are you overwhelmed by images or can you not get past the still photo for the poster of the film? How about sound—can you hear many people commenting or do you hear a voice-over explaining abstract concepts?

These preliminary exercises can help you get started in asking core questions about your future documentary. Marketability, comparative financial analysis of similar films, and box office totals are all equally important numbers. But when the work has to be done day in and day out, there is only one number that really matters: *one-self*. ★



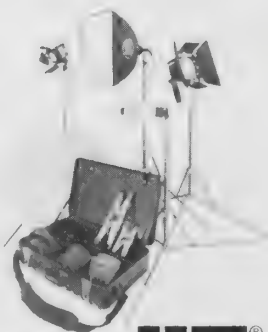
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Festivals

By Bo Mehrad

Listings do not constitute an endorsement. We recommend that you contact the festival directly before sending cassettes, as details may change after the magazine goes to press. Deadline: 1st of the month two months prior to cover date (e.g., Sept. 1st for Nov. issue). Include festival dates, categories, prizes, entry fees, deadlines, formats & contact info. Send to: festivals@aivf.org.

DOMESTIC

ASPEN SHORTSFEST, April 5-9, CO. Deadline: Nov. 4, Dec. 14 (final). Fest is a premiere int'l competitive showcase for short films (30 mins & less). Fest seeks entries of originality, integrity & technical excellence. Cats: short, animation, children, doc, student. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, Beta SP, 70mm. Preview on VHS or DVD. Entry Fee: \$35, \$45, \$55 (final). Contact: Ryan Van Bidder; (970) 925-6882; fax: 925-1967; shortsfest@aspenfilm.org; www.aspenfilm.org.

BARE BONES INT'L INDEPENDENT FILM FESTIVAL, April 17-13, OK. Deadline: Nov. 1; Dec. 31; Jan. 26 (final). Projects budgeted for less than a million dollars are eligible to enter the fest. Seven days of screenings, workshops, screenplay readings, location tour, youth film projects. Cats: feature, doc, short, animation, experimental, script, music video, student, youth media. Awards: Auteur of the Year; Audience Choice Award; Grand Jury Awards. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, Most Video formats. Entry Fee: \$20-\$50. Contact: Shiron Butterfly Ray; (918) 616-1335; barebonesfilmfestival@yahoo.com; www.barebonesfilmfestival.com.

BIG SKY DOC FILM FESTIVAL, Feb. 16-22, MT. Deadline: Sept. 1, Nov. 1 (final). Cats: doc, short. Formats: 35mm, DVD, Mini-DV, DVCam. preview on VHS or DVD. Entry Fee: \$20 (shorts); \$30 (features).

Contact: Doug Hawes-Davis; (406) 728-0753; bigsky@highplainsfilms.org; www.bigskyfilmfest.org.

BLACK MARIA FILM FESTIVAL, January-June, NJ. Deadline: Nov. 20. The Black Maria seeks to "identify, exhibit & reward compelling new independent media, reach audiences in a wide variety of settings nationwide, & advocate exceptional achievement that expands the expressive terrain of film & video." Formats: 35mm, 16mm, 1/2", super 8, DVD. Preview on VHS. Entry Fee: \$35 (shorts, 30 min. or less); \$45 (features, 30-70 min.). Contact: John Columbus, Fest Dir.; (201) 200-2043; fax: 200-3490; blackmariafest@aol.com; www.blackmariafilmfestival.com.

CHICAGO ASIAN AMERICAN SHOWCASE, March 31-April 9, IL. Deadline: Oct. 31. Chicago's annual Asian American film/arts fest, presented by Foundation for Asian American Independent Cinema & The Gene Siskel Film Center. Seeking works by and/or about Asian Americans. Founded: 1996. Cats: feature, doc, short. Formats: All formats accepted. Preview on VHS (NTSC). Entry Fee: \$20 (payable to FAAIM). Contact: c/o FAAIM; (312) 758-4983; tim@faaim.org; www.faaaim.org.

CINEQUEST FILM FESTIVAL, March 1-12, CA. Deadline: Oct 31. Founded in 1990, "Maverick Filmmaking" is annual theme of fest, which showcases an eclectic mix of indie films. Competitive for features,

docs & shorts. Maverick features & shorts of artistic, social or stylistic merit eligible. Fest is a qualifying fest for the Short Films category for the Academy Awards®. Founded: 1990. Cats: Feature, Short, doc, animation, experimental, student, any style or genre. Formats: Digital, 35mm, 16mm, DV, Beta, Beta SP, DVD, DigiBeta. Preview on VHS. Entry Fee: \$40. Contact: Mike Rabehl, Programming; (408) 995-5033; fax: 995-5713; info@cinequest.org; www.cinequest.org.

EXPLORERS CLUB DOC FILM FESTIVAL, Jan. 21, NY. Deadline: Oct. 14. This Festival is a annual celebration of the best in short films on the subjects of Scientific Exploration, Field Research, Wildlife & Conservation. Formats: DigiBeta, Beta SP. Preview on VHS. Entry Fee: \$25 (student), \$30 (shorts), \$45 (features). Contact: Sybille Campbell, Festival Director ; 212/628-8383; fax: 628-2048; filmfestival@explorers.org; www.explorers.org/spec_events/filmfest/filmfest.php.

FLICKERING IMAGE FESTIVAL, Jan. 7, CA. Deadline: Nov. 1. This fest screens ten winning short films & screens it to Hollywood audience giving exposure & publicity to the film. Cats: short, any style or genre. Formats: DVD, Beta SP, Mini-DV, DV. Preview on DVD or VHS. Entry Fee: \$30. Contact: Dr. Paul Molinaro; shortsfest@actorsbone.com; www.actorsbone.com/shorts.

FULL FRAME DOC FILM FESTIVAL, April 6-9, NC. Deadline: Oct. 15, Nov. 15, Dec. 15 (final). The four day event takes place at the historic Carolina Theatre in downtown Durham, North Carolina, w/ morning to midnight screenings, panel discussions, seminars, Q&A sessions. Works must have been completed after Jan. of previous year. Films cannot be longer than 180 min. Cats: doc. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, Beta SP, DigiBeta. preview on VHS/DVD. Entry Fee: \$35; \$45; \$55 (final). Contact: Phoebe Brush; (919) 687-4100; fax: 687-4200; phoebe@fullframefest.org; www.fullframefest.org.

INDEPENDENT FILM FORUM, Nov. 14-Jan 31. Deadline: Nov. 5. Free online film fest in which winner is determined by registered users of the site, as well as ten professionals from the entertainment industry. Contact: Jesse D'Aiello; (973) 865-6838; support@independentfilmforum.com; www.IndependentFilmForum.com.

KIDFILM, January 21-22, TX. Deadline: October 18. Fest is "the oldest & largest children's fest in the world". Featuring the

best new films & classic films from around the world for audiences of all ages. Featuring nat'l premieres of works. Filmmakers in attendance. Founded: 1984. Cats: short, feature, family, children. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, All Video Formats. Preview on DVD or VHS. Entry Fee: None. Contact: c/o USA Film Festival; (214) 821-6300; fax: 821-6364; usafilmfest@aol.com; www.usafilmfest.com.

NEW YORK INT'L CHILDREN'S FILM FESTIVAL, March 3-19, NY. Deadline: Oct. 15. Competitive fest screens 75 new works, shorts & features, screen to an est. audience of 20,000 children ages 3-18, parents, filmmakers & media execs. Plus workshops, panels, sidebar events & presentations. Founded: 1997. Cats: feature, doc, short, animation, experimental, music video, student, youth media, family, children. Formats: 35mm, Beta SP, DVD. Preview on VHS or DVD. Entry Fee: \$75 (feature, 45 min. or longer); \$50 (short, under 45 min.); \$25 (student). Contact: Emily Shapiro; (212) 349-0330; fax: 966-5923; info@gkids.com; www.gkids.com.

ORLANDO INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL, Nov. 4-6, FL. Deadline: Oct. 8. This fest showcases the most exciting, creative, and cutting-edge features, shorts, animations, commercials and videos from around the world. Cats: feature, short, animation, music video, commercial, interactive media, doc, experimental, student, any style or genre. Awards: Winners receive Limited Distribution In Major US Cities, with promo and marketing package. Preview on VHS. Entry Fee: Features: \$50; Shorts (Under 40 minutes): \$35; Student fee: \$25. Contact: OIFF, 4270 Aloma Avenue #124-61C, Winter Park, FL, USA 32792; (407) 894-7842; info@orlandofilmfestival.com; www.orlandofilmfestival.com

PAN AFRICAN FILM FESTIVAL, Feb. 9-20, CA. Deadline: Oct. 31. Founded in 1992, fest presents features, shorts & docs from Africa, Caribbean, Latin America, Europe, South Pacific, Canada & US. Films must be by or about people of African descent. Cats: feature, doc, short. Formats: 35mm, 1/2", 3/4", Digital Video. Preview on DVD or VHS. Entry Fee: \$20.

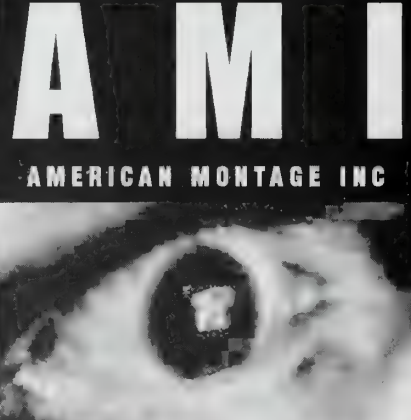


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Contact: Ayuko Babu, exec. director; (323) 295-1706; fax: 295-1952; info@paff.org; www.paff.org.

PORTLAND INT'L FILM FESTIVAL, Feb. 10-25, OR. Deadline: Nov. 1. Noncompetitive fest focuses primarily on new work from outside the US, but American features, docs & shorts included. Fest screens nearly 100 films from over 30 countries. Cats: feature, doc, short, animation, experimental. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, 3/4". Preview on VHS. Entry Fee: \$25. Contact: Bill Foster ; (503) 221-1156; fax: 294-0874; info@nwfilm.org; www.nwfilm.org.

SAN FRANCISCO INT'L FILM FESTIVAL, April 20-May 4, CA. Deadline: Nov. 11; Dec. 9. Founded in 1957 & the oldest film fest in america, SFIFF is presented each spring by the San Francisco Film Society showcasing approx. 200 features, docs & shorts; fest is dedicated to highlighting current trends in int'l film & video, w/an emphasis on work w/out US distrib. Founded: 1957. Cats: feature, doc, short, animation, experimental, music video, student, youth media, TV, any style or genre. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, 3/4", Beta SP, 70mm. Preview on VHS or DVD. Entry Fee: \$15-200 (depending on category of film or video). Contact: Programming Dept.; (415) 561-5022; fax: 561-5099; programming@sffs.org; www.sffs.org.

SLAMDANCE FILM FESTIVAL, January 19-27, UT. Deadline: shorts: Aug. 29; Oct. 11 (final); features: Aug. 29; Oct. 17 (final). Started by 3 filmmakers in 1995, fest's primary objective is to present new indie films by new filmmakers. Founded: 1995. Cats: Short, Doc, Feature, Animation, Experimental, Any style or genre. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, 3/4", 1/2", Beta SP, DVD, Web. Preview on VHS. Entry Fee: \$25-\$60. Contact: Slamdance; (323) 466-1786; fax: 466-1784; mail@slamdance.com; www.slamdance.com.

TRIBECA FILM FESTIVAL, April 25- May 7, NY. Deadline: Nov. 4; Dec. 9 (final, shorts); Dec. 16 (final, features). Created by Jane Rosenthal & Robert De Niro, the mission of the fest is to "enable the int'l film community & the general public to experience the power of film by redefining the film

fest experience". Cats: feature, doc, short, animation, experimental, student. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, HD Cam. Preview on VHS, DVD. Contact: Festival; (212) 941-2304; entries@tribecafilmfestival.org; www.tribecafilmfestival.org.

TRUE / FALSE FILM FESTIVAL, Feb. 24-26; April 21-23, MO. Deadline: Sept. 30; Oct. 30; Nov. 30 (final). The fest welcomes documentaries and work that crosses boundaries between fact and fiction. Festival pays for all travel expenses of invited filmmakers. Cats: doc. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, DV cam, DV, mini-DV. Preview on VHS or DVD. Entry Fee: \$20; \$25; \$30 (final). Contact: Festival, 113 Ripley St., Columbia, MO 65201; (573)443-TRUE; fax: 443-4884; info@truefalse.org; www.truefalse.org.

UNA FILM FESTIVAL, March 3-5, AL. Deadline: Sept. 15; Nov. 15; Dec. 1 (final). Fest sponsored by actor George Lindsey and his alma mater, the University of North Alabama. Screenings of accepted films and free workshops conducted by industry professionals during the event. Works completed in the previous three years are eligible. Cats: feature, short, music video, student, doc, animation. Preview on VHS. Entry Fee: \$20; \$10 (Student). Contact: Festival, UNA Box 5151, Florence, AL 35632; (256) 765-4592; lindseyfilmfest@una.edu; www.lindseyfilmfest.com.

U.S. COMEDY ARTS FESTIVAL, Feb. 9-13, CO. Deadline: Nov. 5. Festival is the annual HBO-sponsored event held in Aspen, Colorado that features the best comedic film, theater, standup, & sketch to an industry-heavy audience. Approximately 25 features & 25 shorts are selected from over 800 submissions. Shorts must be under 60 min.. Cats: Feature, short. Formats: 35mm, Video. Preview on VHS or DVD. Entry Fee: None. Contact: Attn: Film Program; (310) 382-3595; fax: 382-3445; kevin.haasarud@hbo.com; www.hbocomedyfestival.com.

VC FILMFEST: LOS ANGELES ASIAN PACIFIC FILM FESTIVAL, May 4-11, CA. Deadline: Nov. 14; Dec. 16 (final). Visual Communications, the nation's premier Asian Pacific American media arts center,

established fest as a vehicle to promote Asian & Asian Pacific American cinema. Fest has grown from its beginnings as a weekend series into an annual showcase presenting the best of Asian Pacific American & Asian int'l cinema in the United States. Cats: feature, doc, short, animation, experimental. Formats: super 8, 16mm, 35mm, 3/4", Beta SP. Preview on DVD or VHS. Entry Fee: \$20, \$35 (final). Contact: Fest Dir., c/o Visual Communications; (213) 680-4462 x. 68; fax: 687-4848; info@vconline.org; www.vconline.org.

WINGSPAN FILM FESTIVAL, March 3-5, AZ. Deadline: Sept. 15; Oct. 15 (final). Formerly the Tucson Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender Film Festival, fest presents films that focus on the diversity of experience of gay, lesbian, bisexual & transgender people & that present new perspectives on issues concerning the LGBT community. Cats: feature, doc, animation, experimental, short. Formats: 35mm, Beta, Mini-DV, DVD. Preview on VHS or DVD. Entry Fee: \$10; \$15 (final). Contact: Elizabeth Burden; (520) 624-

1779; filmfest@wingspan.org; www.wingspan.org/filmfest.

WOMEN OF COLOR FILM FESTIVAL, March 3-6, CA. Deadline: Oct. 1; Nov. 1 (final). Fest aims to provide a progressive showcase of films created by an underrepresented sector of the film industry. First consideration is given to those films or videos directed by minority women. Second priority for films/videos w/ women of color in key creative positions other than director, e.g. producer, screenwriter, etc. Films may be of any length, genre & format, & must be less than 3 years old. Cats: feature, doc, short. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, Beta, Mini-DV, DV. Preview on VHS. Entry Fee: None; \$10 (final). Contact: c/o Pacific Film Archives; (510) 642-1412; wocfilmproject@berkeley.edu; www.bampfa.berkeley.edu/pfa_programs/women_of_color/.

INTERNATIONAL

ANIMA (BRUSSELS INT'L FESTIVAL OF CARTOONS & ANIMATED FILMS), Feb. 24-March 5, Belgium. Deadline: Nov. 1. Since 1982, fest has been showcase for new,

interesting works in animation, providing opp. to be seen by Belgian film & TV distrib. Cats: animation, short, children, feature, experimental, music video, student. Awards: Belgian competition for best short animated film. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, Beta SP, 70mm, DVD. Preview on DVD, VHS or Beta SP. Entry Fee: None. Contact: Francoise Catahala; 011 322 534 4125; fax: 322 534 2279; info@folioscope.be; www.awn.com/folioscope.

BERMUDA INT'L FILM FESTIVAL, March 17-25, Bermuda. Deadline: Oct. 1; Nov. 1 (final). Feature & doc feature competition cats limited to first & second-time feature directors. The AMPAS has elected to recognise the Bermuda Int'l Film Festival as a qualifying fest for the Short Films category for the Annual Academy Awards®. Founded: 1997. Cats: any style or genre, feature, doc, short. Formats: 35mm. Preview on VHS. Entry Fee: None, \$25 for tape return. Contact: BIFF; (441) 293-FILM; fax: 293-7769; info@biff.bm; www.biff.bm.



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— Julie Rottenberg and Elisa Zuritsky
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The Camargo Foundation maintains, in Cassis, France, a center for the benefit of scholars who wish to pursue studies in the humanities and social sciences related to French and francophone cultures. The Foundation also supports creative projects by visual artists, photographers, video artists, filmmakers, media artists, composers and writers. Creative projects do not need to have a specific French connection.

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Applicants from all countries are welcome. Application deadline is January 15 for the following academic year.

For additional information and application forms, please consult the Foundation's Web site: www.camargofoundation.org or write to:

The Camargo Foundation
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125 Park Square Court
400 Sibley Street
Saint Paul, MN 55101-1928 USA
camargo@jeromefdn.org

CLERMONT-FERRAND INT'L SHORT FILM FESTIVAL, Jan. 27-Feb. 4, Deadline: October 17. Festival presents major int'l competition w/ over 50 countries represented, providing a spectacular event of worldwide cinematographic creation, screening over 120 films to enthusiastic audiences. Cats: Feature, Doc, Animation, Experimental, Short. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, DigiBeta, Beta SP. Preview on VHS or DVD. Entry Fee: None. Contact: Christian Guinot / Melanie Jonier; 011 33 473 91 65 73; fax: 473 92 11 93; info@clermont-filmfest.com; www.clermont-filmfest.com.

FRIBOURG INT'L FILM FESTIVAL, March 12-19, Switzerland. Deadline: Oct. 31. Festival goal is "promoting the dialogue between different cultures." Cats: feature, doc, animation, experimental, short. Awards: Cash awards. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, 1/2". Preview on VHS or DVD. Entry Fee: None. Contact: FIFF; 011 4126 347 4200; fax: 347 4201; info@fiff.ch; www.fiff.ch.

MAX OPHULS FILM FESTIVAL, Jan. 23-29, Germany. Deadline: Nov.1. Estab in 1980, compet fest is particularly for young dirs from German speaking countries (Switzerland, Austria, Luxembourg & Germany) who may enter up 3 films. Features accepted for competition; fest also accepts shorts, docs, & exp works. Formats: 16mm, 35mm. Preview on VHS. Entry Fee: none.; www.max-ophuels-preis.de

MUNICH INTERNATIONAL DOCUMENTARY FILM FESTIVAL, May 4-11, Germany. Deadline: Oct. 28. International Program selects 50 to 60 films from 20 countries. Ample consideration given to films from North America. There are special sections for films from Bavaria and the Balkans. Awards: Festival Award for "Special Documentary Film." Bavarian TV Corp.'s Prize of DM 20,000. Audience Award of DM 5,000.. Formats: 35mm, 16mm. Preview on VHS. Contact: Gudrun Geyer, Trogerstrasse 46, Munchen, Germany D-81675; 49 89 51 39 97 88; fax: 089-470-66 11; www.dokfest-muenchen.de

NETMAGE FESTIVAL, Jan. 25-28, Italy. Deadline: Oct. 15. Held in Bologna, the fest welcomes all projects that make use of visual & audio devices (electronic, electro-acoustic, digital, analogue & cinematographic), w/ the aim of providing an outlet for the various aesthetics & practices connected to contemporary visual production. The projects selected by the fest's curatorial team will feature in the programme of main events. Formats: DVD, 1/2", CD-ROM. Preview on VHS or DVD. Contact: Festival; fax: 011 39 5133 0900; info@netmage.it; www.netmage.it.

PREMIERS PLANS D ANGERS, Jan. 20-29, France. Deadline: Oct. 15. This fest aims to promote European productions in their ten day fest. Cats: feature (1st or 2nd), short (1st only), student. Formats: 35mm, 16mm. Preview on VHS or DVD. Entry Fee: None. Contact: Festival; 011 33 (1) 4271 5370; fax: 4271 0111; paris@premiersplans.org; www.premiersplans.org.

REELWORLD FILM FESTIVAL, April 19-23, Canada. Deadline: Nov.25; Dec. 2 (final). ReelWorld Film Festival aims to promote, encourage & showcase the work of Canada's culturally & racially diverse film & video makers to Canadian & int'l audiences as well as create an awareness of & appreciation for diverse stories. Festival incl. seminars, training sessions, & parties. Founded by actress Tonya Lee Williams ("Young & the Restless"). Founded: 2001. Cats: feature, doc, short, animation, experimental, children, music video, student. Formats: 35mm, Beta, DVD. Preview on DVD or VHS. Contact: Festival; (416) 598-7933; fax: 585-2524; info@reelworld.ca; www.reelworld.ca.

ROTTERDAM INT'L FILM FESTIVAL, Jan. 25-Feb. 5, Netherlands. Deadline: October 1 (Shorts & Docs); November 1 (Features). Largest fest in Benelux w/ reputation for programming innovative, experimental new works alongside more commercial prods. 100+ features have world, int'l or European premieres; 350,000 attendances in previous years. Fest on par w/ Berlin & Sundance; describes itself as "having eye for uncompromising individualism & political & social aspects of film." More than a showcase, it supports prod.

& distrib of work. Fest also hosts Cinemart (deadline Oct. 1), important co-prod. market & meeting place for producers, distributors & financiers; about 40 film projects represented. Additionally, Hubert Bals Foundation offers financial support (deadlines Aug. 1 & Mar. 1) in cats of script & project development, prod. & postprod. funding & distribution & sales. Cats: Doc, Experimental, Feature, Short, animation, installation. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, Beta SP, DigiBeta, CD-ROM. Preview on DVD or VHS. Entry Fee: None. Contact: Programme Dept. ; (011) 31 10 890 9090; fax: 890 9091; programme@filmfestivalrotterdam.com; www.filmfestivalrotterdam.com.

TRIESTE FILM FESTIVAL, Jan. 19-26, Italy. Deadline: Oct. 31. This is the leading fest of Central & Eastern European Cinema in Italy. Cats: feature, doc, short. Preview on VHS or DVD. Entry Fee: None. Contact: Annamaria Percavassi; 011 39 040 31 11 53; fax: 311 993; info@alpeadiacinema.it; www.alpeadiacinema.it.

VICTORIA INDEPENDENT FILM & VIDEO FESTIVAL, Jan. 27-Feb. 5, Canada. Deadline: Sept.1; Oct. 1; Oct. 15 (final). The fest offers high quality films, activities & events, encourages artistic innovation & creativity, provides access for a broad audience segment & is committed to cooperation & collaboration w/ other arts organizations as well as the business community. Interactive programs incl. creative workshops, master classes w/ high profile directors, discussion forums & the brand new Trigger Points Pacific co-production conference, helping make productions happen. Founded: 1995. Cats: any style or genre, feature, doc, experimental, short, animation. Awards: Best Feature, Best Canadian Feature, Best Doc, Best Short, Best Canadian Short. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, Beta SP, 1/2", DV, DVD. Entry Fee: \$10; \$20 (final). Contact: Donovan Aikman, Festival Programmer; (250) 389-0444; fax: 389-0406; festival@vifvf.com; www.vifvf.com.

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By Erica Berenstein

Monica, CA 90403; info@AmericanAccolades.com

CONFERENCES / WORKSHOPS

REEL VISION FILMMAKERS' CONFERENCE

October 21-23, 2005, Radisson Hotel, City Center Tucson, Arizona. In this competitive industry, filmmakers need an edge to break in. That edge is having an outstanding script and an innovative voice. Linda Seger is just one of the world class screenwriting and filmmaking instructors teaching attendees how to express their unique vision on film. Registration: \$100, www.reelinspiration.org, 520-325-9175.

THE SHOWBIZ EXPO will be a focused business-to-business event catering to the working practitioner in television and film. Conference sessions cover the most pressing issues in content creation, production, post-production and distribution. ShowBiz Expo features the latest products, technologies and services for professionals in filmmaking, television, commercials, special effects, content distribution and new media. The exhibits, events and advanced educational content will focus on the evolving workflow process from production to post-production to the digital distribution of entertainment content. The event will take place at the Barker Hangar at Santa Monica Air Center. For more information, visit www.showbizexpo.com.

RESOURCES / FUNDS

NAPT PRODUCER OPPORTUNITY FUND encourages participation in professional development activities that enhance skills in areas such as TV production, marketing, business development or involvement in Public Broadcasting-sponsored workshops. Open to individuals who have a track record of producing programs about Native American subject matter, or who have been involved in Public Broadcasting. Applications will be reviewed quarterly (received by): October 15 for activities scheduled after December 1. For additional information email: native@unl.edu.

THE FUND FOR WOMEN ARTISTS is a non-profit organization dedicated to helping women

COMPETITIONS

AMERICAN ACCOLADES 5TH ANNUAL TV & SHORTS COMPETITION:

A competition designed to provide outlet for emerging talent in a relatively impenetrable industry. Finalist judges include agents, managers & other industry executives. Cats: 1/2 Hour Pre-Existing or 1/2 Hour Pilot for Sit-Com, 1-Hour Pre-Existing, 1-Hour Pilot, or Movie of the Week, or Short Screenplay, treatment, outline, written pitch, spec show bibles, reality show idea/treatment, game show idea/treatment, or Short film (must submit on VHS). Over \$3000 in cash prizes. Deadline: October 8th, 2005. Application available on website: www.AmericanAccolades.com Contact: Accolades TV & Shorts, 2118 Wilshire Blvd., Ste. 160B, Santa Monica, CA 90403; info@AmericanAccolades.com.

AMERICAN ACCOLADES FEATURE SCREEN-WRITING COMPETITION:

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get the resources they need to do their creative work. We focus on women using their art to address social issues, especially women in theatre, film, and video, and we have two primary goals: To Challenge Stereotypes -We support the creation of art that reflects the full diversity and complexity of women's lives. To Increase Opportunities - We advocate for women artists to be paid fairly and to have more opportunities to make a living from their creative work. To learn more about our work, and to sign up to receive these funding newsletters, visit our web page at: www.WomenArts.org.

THE LEEWAY FOUNDATION, which supports individual women artists, arts programs, and arts organizations in the Greater Philadelphia region, has announced the Art and Change Grants provide immediate, short-term grants of up to \$2,500 to women artists in the Philadelphia region who need financial assistance to take advantage of opportunities for art and change. The artist's opportunity for change must be supported by or be in collaboration with a Change Partner—a person, organization, or business that is providing the opportunity or is a part of the opportunity

in some way. Eligible Change Partners include mentors, editors, galleries, community art spaces, theaters, nonprofit organizations, film studios, and clubs. (Art and Change Grant Deadlines: April 11, June 20, and October 31, 2005.) Visit the Leeway Foundation website for grantmaking guidelines and application forms.

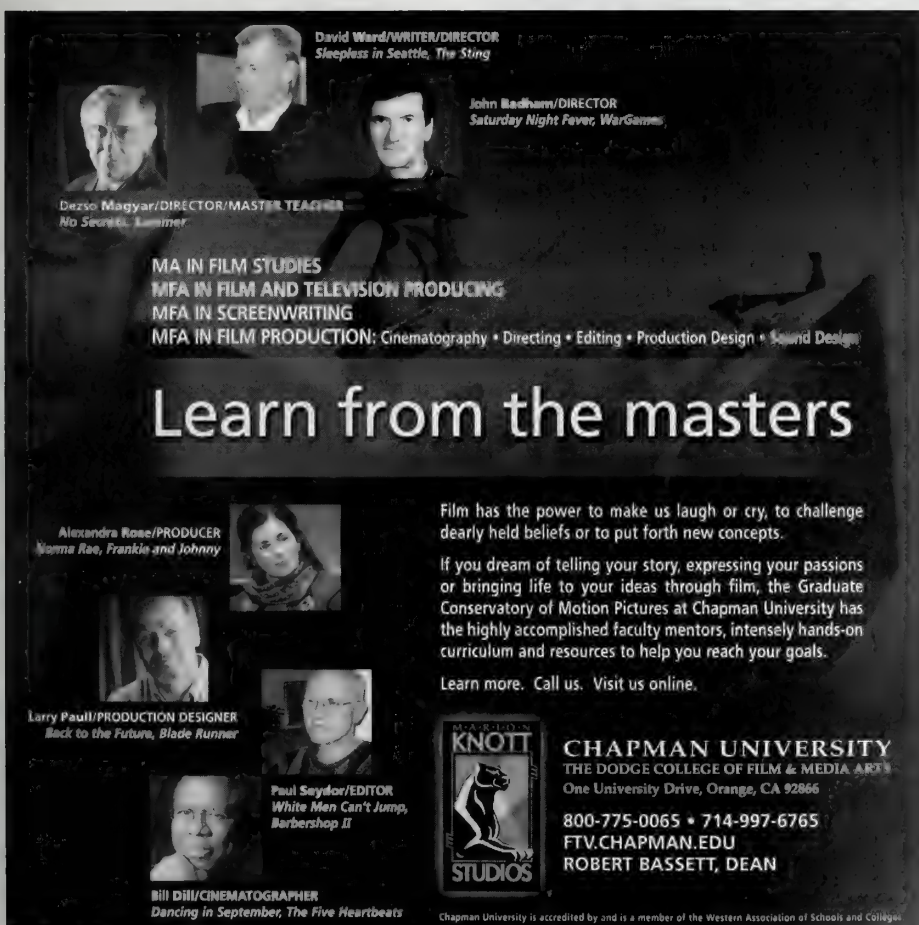
THE PACIFIC PIONEER FUND supports emerging documentary filmmakers—Limited to organizations anywhere in the US, certified by the IRS as "public charities", which undertake to supervise any project for which individuals receive funds, and to control the selection of individual recipients of funds. Grants are limited to filmmakers or videographers who live and work in California, Oregon and Washington. Approximately \$1,100,000. Applications are accepted on an ongoing basis. Application deadlines in 2005-06 are 1/2/06 and 5/1/06. Print out an application from the web site www.pacificpioneerfund.com and send it, along with a VHS tape of up to 10 minutes of edited footage from the project for which support is sought, to P.O. Box 20504, Stanford, CA 94309. Email Armin Rosencranz:

armin@stanford.edu; phone 650-996-3122.

MICROCINEMAS / SCREENINGS

FILM AND VIDEO 825 Series of bi-monthly screenings, providing a forum for presenting experimental film and video in Los Angeles. In a city dominated by Hollywood, venues such as ours become a necessity for artists working in time-based media outside the mainstream of narrative cinema. Open to both shorts and features. Film/Video 825, Gallery 825/LAAA, 825 N. La Cienega Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90069, (310) 652-8272, Fax: 652-9251, gallery825@laaa.org, www.laaa.org/calendar/film_video.html.

SQUEAKY WHEEL's long-running free open screening is one of our most popular programs: second Wednesday of Every Month 8pm! Free! Filmmakers, video/sound/digital artists, community documentarians, and students of all ages are welcome to bring short works for insightful critique. Formats accepted: Super 8, 16mm, video (mini-dv, svhs, vhs), cassettes, cds, Mac compatible cd-rom. See www.squeaky.org/opportunities.html#ongoing for more information.



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THE DOCUMENTARY CHANNEL is a new digital cable channel for airing works by independent documentary filmmakers. Submissions accepted on a rolling basis. <http://documentarychannel.com/index.htm> for more information or email programs@documentarychannel.com.

WIRESTREAM FILMSEARCH WireStream Productions, in co-operation with WireStream networks, is seeking independent films and television series for broadcast. Genres welcome include Drama, Comedy, SciFi, Fantasy, Nonfiction/Reality and Educational films and series, suitable for general/mature audiences. Submit entries to Wayne Hicks, Executive Producer, via email to wayne@wirestreamproductions.com, or to WireStream Productions, 3005B W. Hwy 76, Branson MO 65616.

WEBCAST

FILMFIGHTS.COM democratic filmfestival that anyone can enter. We filmfight every ten days of the month (the 10th, 20th, and 30th) and submissions are due 1 day before the fight—given a title or genre, the submissions are voted on through the website. The winner goes into the archives. For guidelines: <http://filmfights.com/submit.shtml>.

KNOWITALLVIDEO created an online video community aimed at world's largest user-generated video collection. With an exhaustive list of categories covering every conceivable subject, any wannabe star or director with a camera can easily upload short-form digital videos for an unlimited audience of Internet and wireless PDA users who search the site by key word or category, all completely free of charge—equal parts talent showcase and information resource. For more information please visit www.knowitallvideo.com.

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By Erica Berenstein

FILM IN THE CITY seeks documentary film submissions for "Dinner and Docs," an ongoing series that showcases new docs each month. Film Docs must be between 1-1/2 hour long, email your brief one paragraph bio to Staff@Eventsinthecity.org, with 'DINNER AND DOCS' in the subject line (NO ATTACHMENTS), email the length of your film, include contact info.

FIRST SUNDAYS COMEDY FILM FESTIVAL Deadline: ongoing. A monthly festival featuring the best in comedy and short film/digi/animation followed by an after-screening networking event. An ongoing festival held the first Sunday of each month at the Pioneer Theater in New York, First Sundays is the premiere opportunity to showcase work and meet talented directors and other indie dv/film folk. Cats: short (under 20 min.), comedy, animation/dv/film. Formats: Mini-DV, DVD, VHS. Entry Fee: \$20. Contact: (email) film@chicagocitylimits.com or www.firstsundays.com

COMEDY EXPRESS TV seeks funny films under 7 min. to show and promote on TV. Please look at our website www.comedyexpresstv.com which gives background as well as the release which MUST accompany all submissions. Contact: Adam Gilad 9229 Sunset Blvd LA CA 90069 adamgilad@mac.com 310 271 0023.

MACHINE DREAMS is developing a series of

theatrical shows for national audiences that will involve original music, movies, movie shorts, animations, games, graphics and art. We are conducting a global search for the best ORIGINAL independent material in the following categories: Social Commentary & Societal Issues, Humor and Satire, Special Effects, Interactive "No Death" Gaming, Great Media in any form (music, music video, movie, movie shorts, animation, games, graphics, art) We plan to incorporate your work in one or more of the following ways: 1. Include it in a juried show in New York City, with winners receiving recognition and cash prizes and airing on a network television show, 2. Include it in one or more interactive shows in New York City, 3. Include it in distribution across movie theatres, DVD, web, television, cable, satellite or radio broadcast. Email a BRIEF DESCRIPTION to us of your work: kate@machine-dreams.com DO NOT SEND US YOUR WORK YET. For more information call Kate Lawson at 612-371-4428 x11.

NEW SCREEN is an entire Television Channel, dedicated to exhibiting independent film and fine art video. "New Vision Awards," totaling \$17,500 in cash, will be awarded this year for the following categories: Overall Best Film/Video, Best Animation, Best Documentary, Best Drama, Best Student, and Best Fine Art. New Screen will review works of any length, topic, or year of production. There is no fee to submit. For more info: www.newscreen.tv.

SHORT CUTS is now accepting submissions for their monthly screenings. No submission fee—Short Cuts is dedicated to providing filmmakers with an intimate setting to both screen their work and network with others in the film community. Short Cuts encourages submissions from first-time directors, students and professionals living any where in the world. All genres are welcome. No Deadline To submit, please visit our website www.shortcuts.in.

THE PIONEER THEATER—NYC's showcase of independent cinema. Always on the lookout for new movies to screen. To submit for a public screening, check out: www.twoboots.com/pioneer/submit.htm.

End.

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By Michael Terno

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THE CINEMA GUILD, leading film/video/multimedia distributor, seeks new doc, fiction, educational & animation programs for distribution. Send videocassettes or discs for evaluation to: The Cinema Guild, 130 Madison Ave., 2nd fl., New York, NY 10016; (212) 685-6242; info@CINEMAGUILD.COM; Ask for our Distribution Services brochure.

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ARE YOU STUCK?

Fernanda Rossi, script & documentary doctor, specializes in narrative structure in all stages of the filmmaking process, including story development, fundraising trailers and post-production. She has doctored over 30 films and is the author of *Trailer Mechanics*. For private consultations and workshops visit

www.documentarydoctor.com or write to info@documentarydoctor.com.

COMPOSER MIRIAM CUTLER loves to collaborate: docs, features. *Lost In La Mancha/IFC*, *Scout's Honor*, *Licensed To Kill*, *Pandemic: Facing Aids/HBO*, *Indian Point/HBO*, *Positively Naked/HBO*, *Stolen Childhoods*, *Amy's O & more*. (310) 398-5985 mir.cut@verizon.net. www.miriamcutler.com.

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FILMMAKING INSTRUCTOR NEEDED - Concord Academy is a coeducational independent boarding and day school of 340 students grades 9-12. It offers a rigorous liberal arts curriculum in which the arts play an important role. Members of the Visual Arts department are working artists who maintain their own studios and exhibit their work. The Visual Arts Department is looking for a 60-80% time filmmaking instructor. Candidates are expected to teach three levels of filmmaking which includes film (Super 8 and 16mm), video

and digital video production and post-production. Other courses could include Screenwriting, Film History and New Media Production. Experience with Final Cut Pro, Avid DV express pro and other graphic software helpful. Production experience and knowledge of film history and criticism essential. Teaching experience and MFA preferred. Instructor supervises a well-equipped facility with the help of a tech assistant. Duties beyond the classroom include advising students and serving on committees. To apply send resume, teaching philosophy and three references to: Cynthia Katz, Chair, Visual Arts Department Concord Academy, 166 Main Street Concord, MA 01742 Review of applications to begin November 1. Position open until filled. Finalists will be asked to submit a sample reel. No telephone calls please. For questions, email cynthia_katz@concordacademy.org. Concord Academy actively seeks applicants who reflect and support our mission-driven commitment to creating and maintaining a diverse and inclusive school community.

NEW EDUCATIONAL DISTRIBUTOR looking for non-fiction films for non-exclusive distribution. Have you produced a film dealing with the delicate mix of religion, ethics, and public policy? Please send a DVD plus 100 word synopsis to Vital Visuals Educational Media, 16 Brewster Ln., Oak Ridge, TN 37830. Email: info@vitalvisuals.com.

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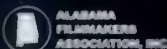
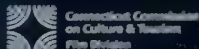
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THE LIST

Superior Scripts

By Erica Berenstein

We asked writers to tell us about the best screenplay they have ever read—whether or not the film (if it was made) lived up to its promise. Here are their responses.

“Monty Python and the Holy Grail. It’s hilarious, and 30 years later, people are still quoting it.”

—Steve Hutton, writer/producer,
The Night Life (2004) and *Fluff* (2003)

“I am a terrible screenplay reader. I tend to get completely overwhelmed by the awareness that directors and actors could take the project in an infinite number of directions, and when asked my opinion of the script, I feel as helpless as I would if a rock band handed me sheet music of their songs and asked me if I thought they kicked ass or not. So all that said, the most fun screenplays to read are the ones that probably will never get made, the ones that are so out-of-control on the page that investors fear that not even the great machinery of film production can reign them in. To that end, I’d nominate my friends Adam Mansbach and Douglas McGowan’s unproduced action screenplay *Nature of the Beast* as my favorite, as it is a controlled and tempered, yet deep down snarlingly delirious piece of writing, and it’s unlikely anyone would dare risk, let alone succeed, in capturing its excesses on film.”

—Andrew Bujalski, director, *Funny Ha Ha* (2003)

“The best screenplay I’ve ever read is *Toy Story*. Although it’s best known for its groundbreaking visuals, the script oozes creativity, humor, and heart. It’s no wonder the screenplay was nominated for an Oscar.”

—Sam Chen, director/ animator, *Eternal Gaze* (2003)

“Paddy Chayefsky’s *Network*, because it is so thorough in laying out what the film is about, what the tone of the piece is, and

what direction each actor, and even the director, should take the film in (while not limiting them) that the screenplay truly is a ‘script’ for the final brilliant film. The dialogue is so bloody interesting, the film has a fantastical quality that lends itself to superior satire, and each character, no matter how small, is relevant to the larger tapestry.”

—Richie Mehta, writer/director, *Amal* (2004)

“The best script I’ve read is *Stigmata* because it is the one that I got the most out of in terms of improving my writing. I actually didn’t care for the story that much, but author Tom Lazarus, who also wrote *Secrets of Film Writing*, helped me understand that we tend to spend too much time describing camera moves and details that don’t contribute to the story. Thanks to *Stigmata* I’ve learned to make my scripts more simple, readable, and enjoyable.”

—Alberto Ferreras, partner in Latin Media Works and director, *Bigger* (2004)

“I don’t know if there’s a ‘best’ on my list. Certainly there are several faves. Up there at the top, and certainly one that won’t be mentioned too often by others, is *Good Will Hunting*. I admire the script because it takes chances within the mainstream arena. It’s easy to take chances with dialogue or direction in an indie—that’s what indies are for. But Matt Damon’s monologues, while sometimes purple, push up against what’s expected for a film of its genre. And when you consider the age of the screenwriters at the time they wrote it—when most of us writers didn’t know what to say—it’s all the more impressive.”

—David Israel, author, *Behind Everyman*

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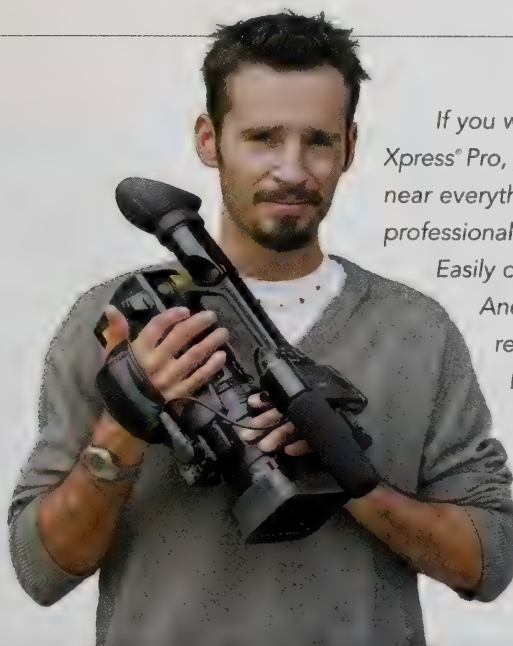
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EDITOR'S LETTER

Dear Readers,

I'm back from maternity leave—although I can't say that I'm particularly well-rested, so my disclaimer straight out of the gate is that any and all errors in this issue can be attributed to the fact that I haven't really slept in two months. Luckily, my deputy editor, Shana Liebman, who did a bang-up job with the October issue, as expected, is tracing my steps to make sure that I don't walk into a wall (or that I don't walk into a wall twice). And our fantastic associate editor, Katherine Dykstra, who also serves as our copy editor and fact checker, is meticulously thorough. The issue should be clean. However, if you're reading an article, especially as this issue focuses on technology, which even if I had slept a full night in the last two months would not be my strong suit, and suddenly it starts talking about breast pumps and immunization shots...well, the next issue will be better.

I think technology has only one job: to be innovative. Though it should also be accessible and cool, and should work. But really, its only job in the 21st century is to be innovative. For filmmakers, this means endless possibilities for getting your films seen. While I'm no fan of personal blogging—I actually think it's about the most solipsistic thing you can do with your creative time, but that's just me—throw some movie-making software into the mix and it can get kind of interesting. Freelance writer and author of the upcoming book, *Festivus: The Holiday for the Rest of Us*, Allen Salkin, none too fearful of self-promotion, walks us through the making of a blog movie in his quirky and spirited piece, *iBlog Therefore iAm* (pg 18). My all-star regular

contributors, Elizabeth Angell and Derek Loosvelt, both delved smartly into bold new worlds—video on demand (VOD) and the future of digital projection (pgs 32 and 40 respectively)—and delivered pieces with great style and intelligence.

Elizabeth Angell did double duty for this issue, also reporting on the rebuilding of IFP NY post-split with IFP LA—now Film Independent or FIND (pg 26). Angell talked with IFP Executive Director Michelle Byrd, who confidently stated that the New York-based organization “can be very nimble” and is “not a massive monstrosity that can't move without 12 other moving parts.” All right then.

We have a couple of new columns—a roundup of newly released DVDs (pg 16), and an On Location piece, which will highlight different spots where shooting independent films is relatively free and easy, or at least relatively easy. On Location this month (pg 24), is New York because, as film producer Michael Mailer put it quite beautifully, “There's a certain universal aura to the city. It behooves any filmmaker to capture that, and if you can, there's great production value.”

For my Q/A this issue, I interviewed the disarmingly debonair David Strathairn, who appeared as Edward R. Murrow in George Clooney's *Good Night, and Good Luck*, which opened in September. We tried to figure out how film and television has become our new literature and what that means for us exactly. Strathairn offered up the following: “We're looking in someone's dirty laundry bag and pulling out their dirty underwear, and we are looking to see how we love each other and how we kill each other.” Sadly, we're also believing it (pg 28).

Enjoy, and thanks for reading
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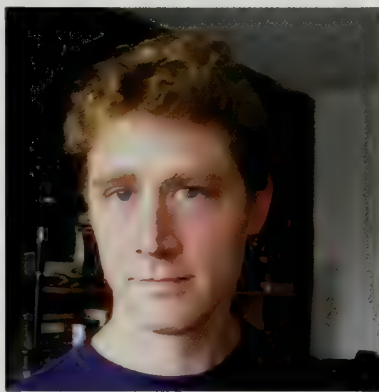
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robot dogs, waterbeds, judicial corruption, dicey golf course projects, guilt and air-conditioning. More info at www.allensalkin.com.

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TimeOut New York Kids, *Celebrity Living*, and *Zink* magazines, as well as *TimeOut New York's* *Eating and Drinking Guide* and *The New Haven Advocate*. Her work has also appeared in *Jane* and *Atomic*, and she is the co-author of *The Renaissance Guide to Wine & Food Pairing* and author of *The Complete Idiot's Guide to Bartending*. She freely cops to giddily following Steve Buscemi on the F train more than once and misses the days when she had an apartment around the corner from the Film Forum. She lives, eats, and drinks in New York City with her husband Dan Marotta and their dog, Sally.

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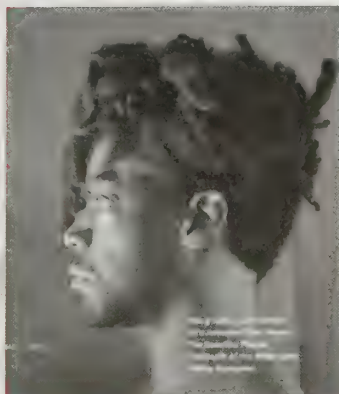
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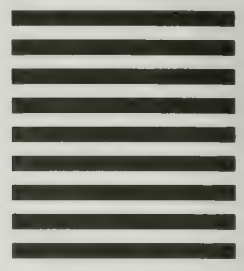
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NEWS

Rolling in New Orleans

The city's filmmakers keep
the cameras steady

By Amy Zavatto



When one of the most cinematic cities in America gets a close-up not for its raw, moody, urban beauty, but for a gruesome natural and neglectful tragedy of Biblical proportions, its natural to wonder how, exactly, its local film community views the situation—as both observer and victim.

Within days of Hurricane Katrina's wallop and the subsequent devastating flood caused by broken portions of Lake Pontchartrain's levee—an avoidable wreckage that put more than 80 percent

of the below-sea-level city under water, left hundreds dead, and thousands homeless—Louisiana film executives were doing damage control at the Toronto International Film Festival, hoping to maintain the momentum that has lured many big-production films to the state. In 2004, the Louisiana film industry brought in \$377 million in much-needed revenue, and many were banking on 2005 topping that. "Film production can still come to Louisiana," insisted Louisiana Production Capital President

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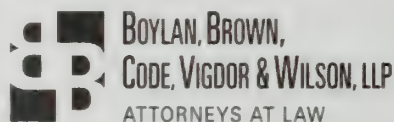
Mark Costello, Esq.

Wrote, produced and sold a
feature length comedy.

Film production counsel to
independent filmmakers.

Municipal counsel on
Woodstock '99.

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Committee of Entertainment,
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Will French in an interview with the *New York Times*. Some agree; some don't.

According to Alex Schott, director of Louisiana's Office of Film and Television, several productions, like the \$150 million Disney project *The Guardian* starring Kevin Costner, have simply moved north to Shreveport, taking advantage of state tax break incentives for film production and saving in relocation costs. Others like *The Last Time*, with Brendan Fraser and Michael Keaton, have abandoned ship entirely.

Meanwhile, all within a week of the Katrina calamity, Louisiana Institute of Film Technology (LIFT) Productions, which, pre-Katrina, had nine projects in production or pre-production with over \$100 million at stake, put together a \$1.5 million package to aid the Louisiana film workers and their families who were affected by the devastation—finding housing, providing stipends, and relocating sets from NOLA to other, dryer spots in Louisiana. Says producer Yoram Pelman, who began shooting *Road House 2* in late September, "That shows us the people here are really dedicated to this industry and rebuilding their state." Meanwhile, all 500 workers on LIFT's payroll continued to get checks, even with closed banks and downed communications systems.

"The commitment of the local film industry to the future of New Orleans and Louisiana, is inspiring and bodes well for the future of our city and state," said Ernest Collins, director of arts and entertainment for the New Orleans' Mayor's Office of Economic Development. Indeed, the day before the hurricane hit, LIFT had closed on a deal to turn 10 acres in downtown NOLA into a multi-million dollar film, television, and media studio. As of this writing, all investors were still committed to the project, which will be built on the banks of the Mississippi River.

And then there are those who, instead of trying to downplay their city's plight, are turning the camera directly on the catastrophe's lingering, irreversible damage. In pure documentarian spirit, Tim Ryan, executive director of New Orleans Video Access Center (NOVAC), and his wife Heather, a local actress, began film-

ing as soon as they embarked on their eight-hour evacuation to Baton Rouge, carrying only a smattering of clothing, their two dogs, a laptop, and a video camera from their Uptown home.

"It's vital that we capture this historic event and work together as a community with other filmmakers to share the rebuilding, strength, courage, challenges, and opportunities of this experience with the world," says Ryan. "Working on this project provides a focus and sense of empowerment at an otherwise shocking and chaotic moment in our lives."

According to Ryan, since the word got out about his mission, he has been inundated with emails, phone calls, and footage from other filmmakers, activists, and members of the New Orleans community at large who want to help with the documentary. "It's exciting to see so much enthusiasm when you realize that most of us involved in this project have been completely displaced," he says. "We've lost jobs, homes, and loved ones, and feel a bit frozen and uncertain about the future."

So far, the Ryans have put down over 20 hours of their own footage, which includes several interviews with others displaced from the city, and are working on a website to document the progress and drum up more interest, which seems to be working. North Carolina's Working Films has contacted them about consulting on the project, and composers, writers, and actors from New York to LA have approached the couple about getting involved.

"Throughout this experience, the media has exposed many of the negative aspects of New Orleans," says Ryan. "We know how much New Orleans has to offer and the greatness of its culture. We believe that there will be many stories of courage and faith in the face of extreme challenges."

Cinequest to Distribute Fest Stand-Outs Through Netflix

Cinequest Executive Director and Co-Founder Halfdan Hussey wants everyone to see what he's up to. Or at least what the attendees at his San Jose Film Festival do. On September 14th, Cinequest launched its very own DVD label and

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simultaneously inked an exclusive deal with Netflix to carry them.

The DVDs, which are also available for purchase for around \$14.99 through Cinequest Online, showcase feature films from Cinequest's annual festival (this year marks its 16th), some of which can be previewed via free download. All of this, according the Hussey, is part of his plan to gain a broader audience for indies that don't make it through the Hollywood distribution system.

"The first thing some people might think is that we are crazy for providing select films for free download on Cinequest Online," says Hussey, who has offered no-fee downloads in the past. "The filmmakers who took a leap of faith with this venture found it to be an excellent marketing tool to further expose their wares. Furthermore, as we predicted, distribution deals occurred."

Six festival stand-outs from years past, including *Awful Normal* (2004), which won Best Documentary in Film Fest 14, and Nickolas Tucker's *Fandom* (2004), the tale of an overwrought fan's love of Natalie Portman, kicked off the DVD launch in September, with three more to follow in October. And for extra karma, Cinequest, whose site gets over 3 million hits per month, plans to offer filmmakers a sweet 70 percent of the DVD sales (minus minor fees incurred in the production costs) and plans to cover most marketing costs. For Hussey, though, it's about getting the word out on the maverick: "These are films for people who want to break away from the typical. If you are looking for hot, raw talent with a delightful lack of celebrity, then check us out."

indieWIRE relaunches website

Despite how grandiose it sounds, its potential for grandiosity, indieWIRE's claim on its homepage that it is "The leading source on independent film since 1996," isn't such a stretch. With 87,000 hits a day for news from Glasgow to Goa and all relevant film fests in between, what began in an AOL chat room in the spring of 1995 has indeed become a go-to site for the independent film industry. Not wanting to gather moss on this sprightly reputation, the site re-launched in September, ever-streamlining the news you can use from the independent film industry at large.

Changes include: Buzz & Rumors, for the word on the street; indieWIRE Insider, which provides coverage of the business, profiles of interesting industry muckety-mucks, and box office reports for filmmakers and other film industry professionals; and a new and improved calendar that reaches even farther into the future. Still in the works is an iPoparazzi feature that will allow readers to send in photos and blog expansion. Says Producer and Manager Brian Clark, "When we first started housing blogs for people in the indie community as an experiment 14 months ago, we never

imagined that they would turn out to be nearly half of the traffic that we're delivering. Now, we're looking for ways to expand that and help serve as a filter to guide people to blogs of interest, whether we're housing them or not. By Sundance, we're hoping to open the gateways of indieWIRE a little further and allow our community to contribute to our coverage—imagine an army of iPoparazzi turning in photos from the events and parties in Park City." And, to ice the cake, there will be an "Encyclopedia of Indie," which will organize all of indieWIRE's years of film info into one big, fat research tool. "As the next phase of our relaunch comes out, this will make navigating our nine years of archives more intuitive (hopefully) for both film professionals doing research and film fans who are discovering films in release that we covered during their festival period," says Clark. Top that. ★

Corrections for the October issue: In "IFC Crashes the Scene," Tribeca Cinemas was incorrectly referred to as the Tribeca Film Center. In the table of contents, Fernando Ramirez, Esq's name was misspelled. We regret these errors.

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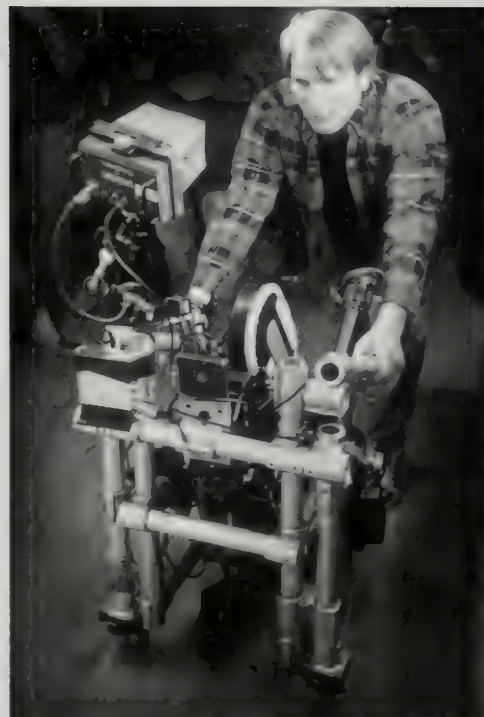
By David Alm

Swivel and Swing

With its new line of jibs and jib accessories, Florida-based EZ FX brings some of the toughest pro shots to the hands of independent filmmakers who don't have a big studio footing the bills. The firm's top model, the EZ FX Jib, sells for \$1,149, and it provides seven feet of camera movement, has a built-in stabilizer, and weighs just 24 pounds. The slightly cheaper Junior Jib (\$979) offers the same features at half the size, and both jibs can accommodate cameras ranging from

mini-DVs to professional-grade film cameras. Separately sold extension kits, tripods, bags, and other accessories comprise a total suite for the mobile filmmaker. Read more at www.ezfx.com.

If your project requires a little more mobility, consider the Swenson TerraScope Mount. This rolling camera platform from Santa Monica-based Innovision Optics allows for optimally smooth, surface-level tracking shots, and its size makes the TerraScope ideal for both interior and exterior shoots. Made of durable yet lightweight aluminum tubing, the 50-pound TerraScope can accommodate cameras that weigh up to 55 pounds; and with its multidirectional wheels the mount can turn on a dime without so much as a bump. Anyone up for making a shot-by-shot recreation of *The Shining*? Here's your chance. Visit www.innovision-optics.com for more.



L-R: The Fig Rig [courtesy Bogen Imaging]; the Swenson TerraScope Mount



Interactivity for the Indies

Interactive DVDs may be the wave of the future, but not if only the pros can actually produce them. Enter DVDit 6, a simple authoring program from Sonic Solutions that allows independent filmmakers to add menu designs, navigation systems, and interactive features to their own projects on DVD. DVDit Pro 6 also includes eDVD, which allows you to link your DVDs to websites, hi-definition video, hi-res stills, MP3s, flash files, text documents, and virtually any other type of file. DVDit 6 runs \$299.99; DVDit Pro 6 \$399.99. Visit www.sonic.com for more information.

Take it from Figgis

Okay, this item isn't exactly new, but we love its history (and its name): the Fig Rig. Conceived by filmmaker Mike Figgis in the late 1990s, the Fig Rig is a modular support system for handheld digital cameras that can double as a frame on which to mount myriad accessories: monitors, mics, mixers, etc. Figgis used the contraption to shoot several films over the past five years, including *Hotel* (2001), part of the documentary mini-series *The Blues* (2003), and *Cold Creek Manor* (2003). Manufactured by Manfrotto, the Fig Rig sells for \$375 and is routinely updated to reflect new developments in steadying technology. Read more at www.bogenimaging.com.

Digital Filter

With Kodak's Look Manager System, color correction can be a proactive move—instead of a desperate, reactive attempt to save a shot in post. This software, which is both Mac- and PC-compatible, allows you to change the coloration of an entire scene in a DV movie by correcting a single still through a Photoshop-like process. After correcting the still, you tell the software to apply the same coloration to all the footage in the same folder. You probably don't want to throw your color filters away, but at least you can leave them at home. Find out more about KLMS at www.kodak.com.



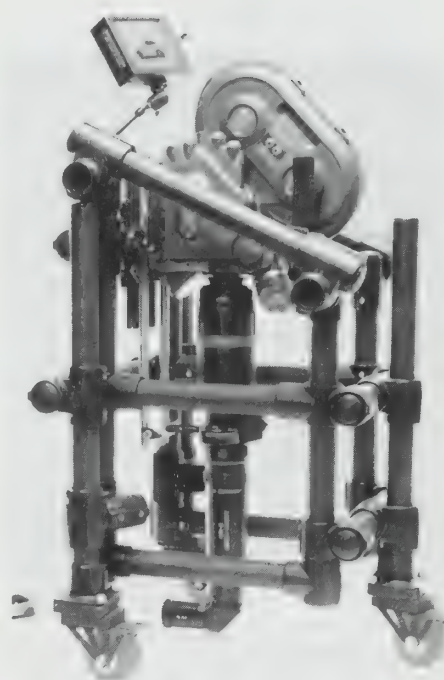
The Fig Rig [photo courtesy Bogen Imaging]

Too Cool for School

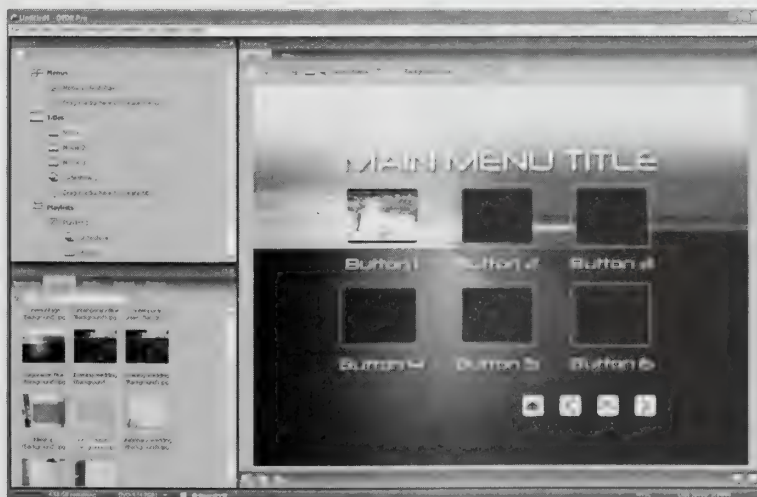
Most agree that film school is of dubious value, often drawing students for industry connections over actual training. But what if you really just want to learn how to make a movie? You might consider One on One Film Training, an individualized, tutorial-based program launched this summer by Jeffrey Seckendorf, a Hollywood-based veteran filmmaker and film teacher. The 80-hour program can be tailored to each student's schedule and needs. At \$8,000, it's not cheap—but it's a whole lot cheaper than USC. Seckendorf also offers a "Two on One" package for people who wish to attend with a partner, where the second person is charged half the regular fee. Visit www.oneononefilmtraining.com for more information.

Don't Get Ripped

Remember when DVDs seemed impossible to pirate? Now, with DVD-writers, a standard feature on most home computers, those once-uncrackable discs of code can be duplicated ad infinitum, like so many blank tapes. Studios lose nearly a billion dollars per year through the so-called "digital hole"—and indie productions made on a budget are especially vulnerable. That's where Macrovision's RipGuard DVD comes in. RipGuard's manufacturers boast its ability to block 97% of the methods used by DVD rippers, potentially saving filmmakers and studios millions. For more on how to protect your projects, visit www.macrovision.com. ★



TerraScope with car

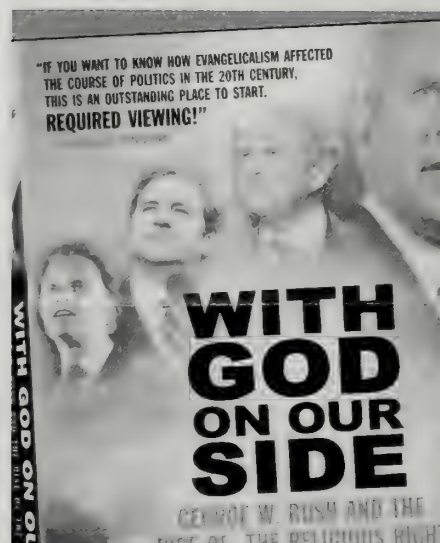
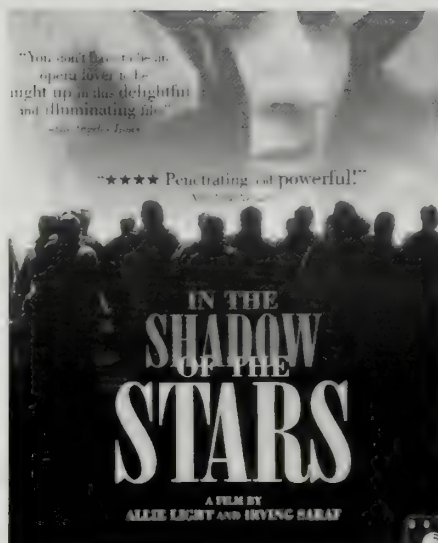
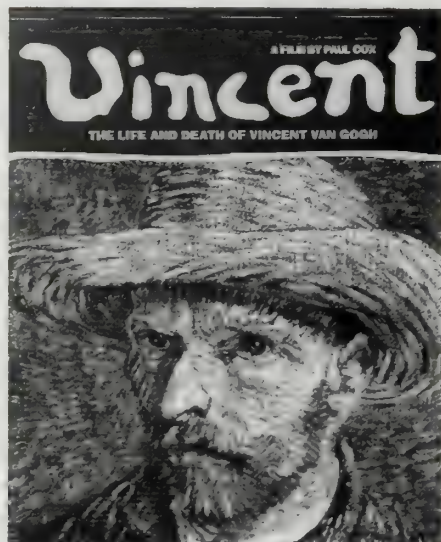


DVDIt 6, a simple authoring program [Sonic Solutions]

on DVD

Reviews of films now available on DVD

By Shana Liebman



The Global Lens Collection on DVD

Every year, the Global Film Initiative presents the Global Lens series: 10 films from developing countries that travel to cultural institutions around the United States. After the tour, the best-of are released on DVD with bonus features about the film's country of origin and its emerging cinema. This year, the collection adds two films to the series: *Margarette's Feast* (October 25), a Brazilian Chaplin-esque saga about an everyman, Pedro, who unexpectedly receives a bottomless bag of money. The silent film's excellent score won Best Music Award at Cannes. *Shadow Kill* (October 25), from India, is the diabolical tale of a hangman whose occupational guilt leads to that old familiar trajectory: alcoholism to radical religiousness and finally madness. Find these films at www.firstrunfeatures.com; more information at www.globalfilm.org.

The God Who Wasn't There

Four years after his off-Broadway rock musical "Barboy," creator Brian Flemming is taking on Jesus. The Christian Fundamentalist turned "athe-

ist-Christian" is on a mission to prove that the son of God did not, historically, exist. In this irreverent feature-length doc (released in 15 cities last year), Flemming asks religious experts to interpret and discuss sections of the scripture that Flemming thinks prove that "most likely Jesus never walked the Earth." This idea we have faith in, he says, was probably created by "men with a political agenda." A seemingly reasonable argument, until you realize that Flemming himself still "likes Jesus" and depends on him for salvation. In other words, keep your cross—just get the facts straight. The film's saving grace is its soundtrack, which rocks with remixes of songs by David Byrne and Thievery Corporation. The DVD is now available at www.microcinema.com.

Vincent: The Life and Death of Vincent van Gogh

Vincent van Gogh was a prolific man: He created 180 paintings and wrote more than 750 letters to his brother, Theo, detailing the various tragedies and infrequent joys of his life. (Of those 180 paintings, van Gogh sold only one in his lifetime.) In this 1987 Australian film,

actor John Hurt reads van Gogh's letters while Paul Cox, the writer/director, shows us some of the landscapes, scenes, and images that van Gogh may have seen or had in mind as he painted. (A group of people in a room slowly coming together to form a van Gogh-like still.) Cox's creative interpretation of van Gogh's art and mind, combined with the artist's actual written thoughts, is a moving juxtaposition. This is not art history 101, and refreshingly, the impression we get of the painter is not the usual madman (a la Robert Altman's 1990 film *Vincent & Theo*), but rather of a quietly thoughtful and romantic artist. www.docurama.com.

In the Shadow of the Stars

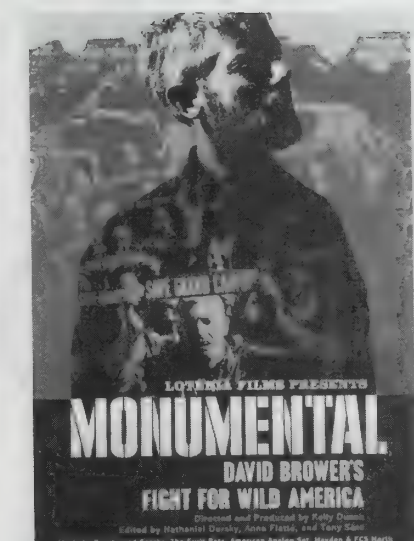
Do you know what it feels like to be upstaged by a diva? How about a large, celebrated, belting opera singer? In this documentary, which won an Oscar in 1992, the 11 chorus singers of the San Francisco Opera explain the frustration of a career in the shadows and the humiliation that haunts them on and off the stage. One of the singers grew up in a Bronx tenement and did time in a mental institution before becoming a tenor.



Another is the son of a truck driver, and one woman swatched the Frankfurt Opera House burn down days before her debut. All discuss the psychological damage they have endured from always being outshone. The performance segments are excellently filmed and fun to watch (especially because they're so skillfully intercut with the singers' stories). But if you don't have even a little love for opera, the film starts to feel like a bitch session. These are aspiring divas after all, and most of them prove to have the self-absorption needed to succeed in the role. www.docurama.com.

With God on Our Side: George W. Bush and the Rise of the Religious Right in America

This compelling doc, which aired on British TV on the eve of W's first election and then again in the United States right before W's second, argues that the evangelical vote led to both Reagan's victory margin in 1980 and Bush the elder's in 1988, and reached its political apotheosis in the born-again prodigal son George W. Bush—or as his comrades call him, "the real deal." Filmmakers Calvin Skaggs and David Van Taylor attempt to shed some light on this progression and into the darkness of W's mind by probing and interpreting the one group who seems to



have the answers: the religious right—including Jerry Falwell, Billy Graham, a couple Bush buddies, as well as Bush himself. It's a thoughtful but not terribly cynical take on the Right's rise, and 100 minutes seems like more than enough to spend with so many religious nuts. www.firstrunfeatures.com.

Monumental: David Brower's Fight for Wild America

In light of recent world catastrophes, "Save the Wilderness" seems like an out-dated crusade, which is perhaps why filmmaker Kelly Duane imposed a hipster indie-rock soundtrack on this documentary about longtime Sierra Club head David Brower. Brower, a former rock climber and friend of Ansel Adams, saved the Grand Canyon, created Redwood National Park, North Cascades National Park and Point Reyes National Seashore, and is considered the greatest environmentalist of the 20th Century. Duane's well-made film documents Brower's battles and victories from the 1930s until his death in 2000 using old footage from the Sierra Club's archives. The material may seem dated but it's heartening to see a real activist at work—someone who actually effects political change and doesn't just whine about it. www.firstrunfeatures.com. ★



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By ALLEN SALKIN

Freak boy and Festivus poles. Guttled tuna auctioned in Tokyo. And Thanos-the-PR-man singing "Feelings" at karaoke. Whoa-oh-oh.

I'm a blogger, but the existence of blogs isn't news. What Freak Boy (a home-movie role I have twice played) wants you to know is how the use of iMovie, Apple Computer's low-end, low-cost movie editing software for the Macintosh, has elevated my corner of the infinitely cornered internet into a class way beyond the chattering clatter of bad blogs.

(The bad kind is where the blogger makes hourly text entries like: "Rode the bus this a.m. then got a Jamba Juice, green tea flavor. Tasted like green tea meets shamrock shake. I feel lachrymose today. Haven't felt such since last tues when BOYFRIEND left the infamous voicemail...")

No, on allensalkin.com and festivus-book.com, visitors aren't treated merely to self-indulgent drivel. Here they can meet in full motion some of the characters and subjects about which I write, and, thanks to iMovie's slightly-more-than-bare-bones quality, these moving characters appear in a way that feels, well, bloglike.

I don't just blog about Festivus—or write about the writing of my book on Festivus (*Festivus: The Holiday for the Rest of Us*, Warner Books 2005)—I present you with a minute-thirty-five web-friendly QuickTime of some folks I met in



iBlog

therefore iAm

Austin who are planning to set up a Festivus pole lot in their front yard. You get to see and hear these flesh-and-blood Austiniens who want to observe the Seinfeld-popularized holiday by selling hearty cuts of unadorned aluminum fence post for people to place in their living rooms instead of, or in addition to, Christmas trees, menorahs, kinaras and harvest lanterns. The movie downloads quickly and arrives complete with titles and credits and funky bubble-wipe transitions.

Likewise, in another blog entry, when I go on about the six weeks I spent in Greece writing a different book, I can cut through the claptrap with my short film *The Return of Freak Boy*. Shot entirely in



30-second chunks with the movie function of my four-year-old Canon digital still camera, this shot was made at the small Greek hotel where I

stayed during that six weeks. I edited it with iMovie on my six-year-old PowerBook, and the whole production process, from scriptwriting to uploading onto my site, took three hours. Now visitors can watch me drink a Mediterranean espresso and freak out disturbingly at the Aegean Sea, to a clever musical soundtrack.

There's something about iMovie that is particularly in the spirit of blogs. It imparts an inbred low-budget feel that fits into a blog better than a sharply produced Hollywood trailer, but it is also just slick enough to render short movies

fun and watchable. Simple technology has made producing a professional looking blog fairly easy. Blogger.com and Typepad.com allow anyone to do it cheap. Although blogs from these popular sites aren't perfect; they still have the around-the-edge roughness of amateur work—the standardized fonts, the lack of adequate page breaks, the slightly confusing graphics that gives the credence of a good garage band, and puts the focus not on the hocus pocus bells and whistles, but on the quality of the content.

Of course, most blog content sucks. Most people are not professional writers, and for good reason—they can't write. Their writing is boring or pointless, and

Blogger Allen Salkin at work and (above) a fake ladybug on Santorini in *The Return of Freakboy* [all photos courtesy Allen Salkin]

readers pick up on that as quickly as a dog can sense a plastic pork chop is made of plastic and not pork.

Besides, featuring photos alone to back up a blog's content is so dial-up. It's fine to show the face of the person who dumped you, but it's way better to use iMovie's Ken Burns effect to slowly zoom in on the photo of the person who dumped you, closer and closer, until the only thing in the frame is the person's slightly moist right-nostril-rooted nose hair. That's not just a photo, that's a statement!

Better yet, volume levels can be adjusted to make up for lame on-camera microphones, music can be added seamlessly from iTunes, and photos slotted in from iPhoto—all part of Apple's iLife suite that retails for \$80 (if you already have iTunes). It's important to note that in order to put movies onto your blog you will not be able to use sites like Blogger.com and Typepad.com. They don't yet allow movies, just photos, which makes your blog with movies (and mine) that much more unique.

Let me share a few tips on making an effective iMovie to complement a blog.

* Make it absolutely as short as possible. The movie will load faster and more people will watch to the end if it is one minute or less. This involves cutting everything ruthlessly. Don't let scenes last



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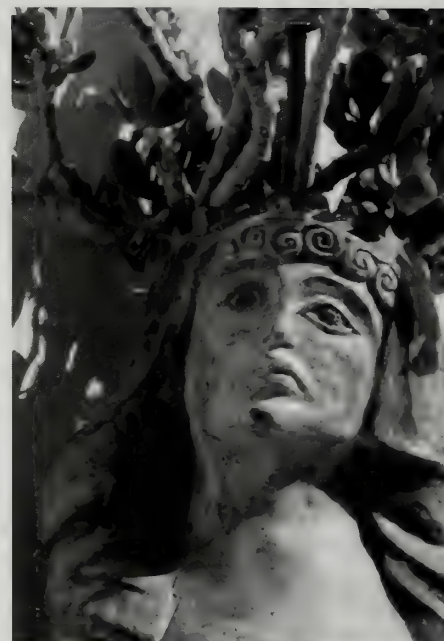
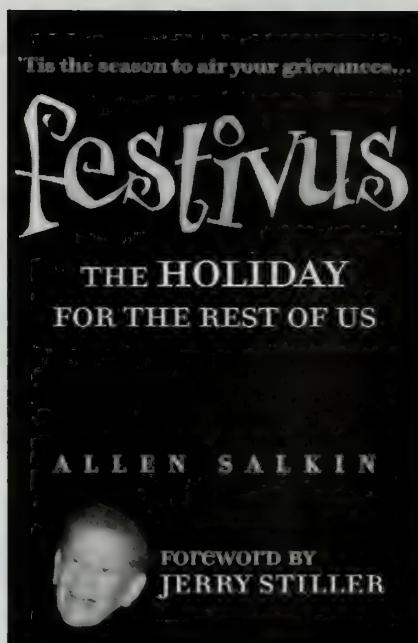
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(L-R) The cover of Salkin's new book; a medusa plant on Naxos shot for the author's iMovie

a tenth of a second longer than absolutely necessary. It all adds up. Every extra second will lead you to lose a viewer.

- * Light music works best on computer speakers. Heavy metal gets muddy on little speakers. Something sparse like classical won't lead people who surf at work to hit mute immediately.

- * Have a point, a story, a reason. Don't just make a film of your baby crawling, score it with sweet Sesame Street music, and call it "Baby's First Crawl." That's nice, but it's better if, for instance, you call it "Baby Bulldozer" and highlight the funny moments like when your baby rams into a stuffed animal or dives into a plate of Spaghettios. You could add demolition derby sound effects or a motor sound or even subtitles that say "BLAMMO!" at each moment of impact. Viewers will genuinely enjoy themselves, and they will come away with the same point that a boring movie called "Baby's First Crawl" might make: Your baby is crawling now and is smart and cute and wonderful. Goo-goo.

- * Use iMovie special effects sparingly. One split-screen or shooting flare is clever. More is cloying and patience-testing. Don't patience test. You will fail that test every time on the Internet.

- * But do play around with iMovie's special effects and understand how effective they can be. Switching to black and

white or making the film look scratchy and old can be great storytelling devices. As with any film, use all tools of the medium to communicate your ideas.

- * If you have end credits, make sure they move fast. If anyone actually cares to read them, they can easily pause the QuickTime. This isn't a theater. The audience has a pause button.

- * End with a still frame instead of a fade to black. That way when the movie ends, the QuickTime viewer will freeze on the image of your choice, hopefully something emblematic of the whole film.

- * Use the transitions tools, but don't get too corny unless you want corny. Some of the transitions on iMovie are very 1970s funky. Careful.

- * On my site, I have a special "Movies" page separate from my blog page. I can add links within the blog that will begin loading the movie immediately, or visitors can go to the movie page and see the full menu of movies.

- * Of course, movies take up more space than photos and words, so it's a good idea to keep track of how much space the host provides. I use OpenSourcehost.com. My web designer used an open source program Drupal to build my site and set up a page that allows me to easily transfer movies to the site using ftp (file transfer protocol).

* Don't put anything porn-like in your movie or the title of your movie. You will risk upsetting your hosting site and also being found by the countless porn-surfers who could overwhelm the bandwidth of your site and lead to a crash, or to you exceeding what your host allows. (I found this out with the large number of hits I received with the seemingly innocuous titled photo entry: "Velodrome Girl." It is a picture of a fully dressed spectator with interesting face paint at the Olympic bicycling venue in Athens.)

* When you think everything is done and uploaded and working perfectly, call someone with a different operating system and have them test the movie by accessing it on the web like a normal person. Make sure it works.

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Freak Boy freaks out: self-portrait shot with digital still camera's movie function

Have fun and don't make a chore of it. You want your time commitment to be blog-like: small. Otherwise it will become a pain. A less-is-more example is my little iMovie of Thanos. I did almost no editing on this 30-second film of a guy I met in Tokyo last year pausing in his moment of karaoke-ing "Feelings" and switching to French mid-song to greet the crowd: "Madams and Messieurs, bon soir." Pure cheese. I tinkered with the sound levels a little and put it up on my site.

Some video, like the rare great blog entry, needs no editing. Most does. ★

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ASK

THE DOCUMENTARY DOCTOR

By Fernanda Rossi

Dear Doc Doctor:

In the post-production phase, technology becomes so complicated—there are so many options. Any suggestion on what's the best format with which to master my film while still being affordable?

Remember when there was only one way of doing things? When you would happily leave the working print at the laboratory's door and come back a few days later to pick up the finished film master? OK, OK, maybe it wasn't exactly like that, but having to choose between 16mm, 35mm, and Panavision pales in comparison to the amount of formats available today. I'm reluctant to name them all for fear of having an outdated list by the time you read the second paragraph.

However, the principles of how to manage the post-production phase haven't changed. Planning ahead can save you from mayhem. In-house Post-Production Supervisor and Coordinator Tracey Soast from PostWorks in New York suggests: "Before you start shooting with the latest camera available in the market, make sure the deck for such tape has been invented already and that some post-house owns such a deck."

Once you check with a post-produc-



tion supervisor as to whether your shooting format has some life in the afterworld of post, a few other questions need to be answered: What's the master format? And what will be the workflow? Meaning, how are all the stages of post going to be organized—from conforming the master, to color correction and mixing? Soast continues: "You need a versatile format that has passed the test of time, especially if working with a tight budget. You have to trust that such a format will be around, if not for a decade, at least the next five years. Then you want that format to be able to play at festivals and to be easily transferable to other formats used in other markets and venues, including the foreign ones. As per today,

that format is HD and if money is scarce, at least go for DigiBeta."

Of course there are exceptions, variations, and very special cases that defy all of the above, but money shouldn't be a deterrent. We are talking about the master of your film here. It never ceases to amaze me how many filmmakers won't think twice of paying double the standard fee for a recent award-winning DP or editor, but will cringe at the cost of a tape! Nickel-and-dime-ing in post jeopardizes all the work you have done up to that point.

Also, bear in mind that post-production is the last stop and that there are no more opportunities to "fix it later." So if you plan for post-production early on and budget for it accordingly, hopefully the only surprise will be that there were no surprises.

Dear Doc Doctor:

I'm dealing with lots of technical problems, and I don't consider myself a techie person. Should I hire a post-production supervisor to help with the non-artistic stuff?

An editor friend of mine recently screamed to me over her cell: "I'm in post-production hell!" Another friend, a DP, said to me the other day, "Oh gosh, I'm in shooting hell!" Mind you, both are very "techie" people. Such remarks lead me to believe that *Dante's Inferno* was

actually a prediction of the fate technology will bring upon filmmaking: one circle of fiery hell after the other! But the flames can be doused with a post-production guardian angel and by repeating the mantra: "I can be techie if I just apply myself."

You might think that what makes you creative is not knowing how to operate your VCR. However, I doubt Michelangelo ever said, "Chisel? What's that?" Knowing the tools of your trade can only help your creative process. Furthermore, taking pride in not caring about technical "non-artistic" issues might put you at a disadvantage with all those very technical people who are going to help you finish your film, including your post-production supervisor. That doesn't mean that you should present yourself as technically knowledgeable if you are completely ignorant on the subject. But trying to at least show interest in the basics can help more than you may realize.

Once you are able to communicate (even if it's just the basics) with the post-world, you can make a decision as to whether you can brave handling things on your own with the in-house post-production supervisor, you want to recruit your editor for a few extra weeks to help you out, or you would prefer to hire a pro in the field. As usual, all choices have their advantages and costs.

In-house supervisors are happy to explain it all to you and help you to make decisions, but they are also handling several other projects at the same time. Your editor, if technically inclined, can be a great resource, probably more familiar than you with the process. Your own supervisor, if experienced enough, is ideal. Hopefully, you've budgeted for one—if not, go for that extra round of fundraising, especially if you have a complex project. There are so many people and machines involved in post that the margin for error is unavoidable. Having your own post-production supervisor can minimize that margin-making hell. ★

Fernanda Rossi is a filmmaker and story consultant, and the author of Trailer Mechanics: A Guide to Making Your Documentary Fundraising Trailer.

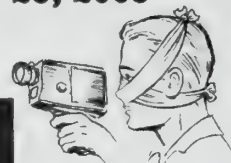
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Frames of New York

By Katherine Dykstra

New York City equals screen value. Think about it: The whole world knows New York. They know its diverse personalities (Times Square, The Village, Central Park), the way that it sounds (barking traders, bleating taxis, bellying street vendors), and that the energy there is tangible. They know these things even if they've never set foot in the city because they've encountered them dozens of times in movies and on television.

"New York is so well-known internationally that everyone is always trying to capture it. It's a very distinctive locale," says producer Michael Mailer, whose films include *Harvard Man* (2001), the Kevin Bacon-directed *Loverboy* (2005), and most recently *Kettle of Fish*, which was shot in New York and which Mailer hopes to debut at Sundance 2006. "There's a certain universal aura to the city. It behooves any filmmaker to capture that, and if you can, there's great production value."

Makes sense. But shooting in New York is bound to be a major headache — what with securing permits, finding parking, and getting police assistance and all in a city of nearly nine million. Factor in the sheer number of filmmakers who are interested in doing so and it sounds like quite the trick, and a costly one at that. Except it's not. In actuality, "The

city is very film-friendly," says Mailer. "The Mayor's Office goes out of its way to accommodate you."

Mailer's right. Processing an estimated 150 permits a day, the Mayor's Office of Film, Theatre, and Broadcasting, turns around requests "in 20 or 30 minutes," according to Commissioner Katherine Oliver. The permits are free and they come complete with police assistance (two officers for every eight-hour shift), parking, access to public locations, and a concierge service created to make smooth all aspects of production including scouting, planning a budget, and preparing for global premieres and launches.

"We're not just a permit office," says Oliver, who is in her third year as film commissioner. "We want to make it as easy as possible for filmmakers by helping them every step of the way from script to screen."

With this in mind, last January Mayor

Michael Bloomberg signed into effect a 15 percent tax credit (10 percent comes from the state and five percent from the city) for filmmakers who complete at least 75 percent of stage work in the five boroughs as part of the "Made in NY" Incentive Program. The initiative also includes free ad space in bus shelters, phone kiosks and other city media (valued at one percent of NYC production costs). In June, the "Made in NY" Discount Card was added, with which filmmakers can take advantage of special deals at more than 300 NYC vendors, including hoteliers, camera dealers and banks among others during the course of their shoot.

"The whole process makes indie movies far more feasible," says Mailer. "I couldn't have shot *Kettle of Fish* here without the rebate. I would have had to go to Canada and fake New York, which happens far too often."



Shooting in the Big Apple

Not only is the price right, but the set options are endless. There are iconic New York locales (The Empire State Building, The Flatiron, Wall Street) as well as distinctive neighborhoods (Chinatown, The Upper East Side, Harlem).

And New York isn't only great at being New York—it can stand in for just about any other setting as well. Consider *Sex and the City's* Paris finale (shot in the West Village) or the Louisiana of *Dead Man Walking* (1995) (filmed in Staten Island). "Staten Island can be suburban, cosmopolitan, quaint, old-town America, lush forest," says Oliver. "There's such diversity, that it is a treasure trove for location managers."

When it comes to location, according to Mailer's experience, just about anything is possible. "To my knowledge, we've never been turned down for a location," says Mailer, who's shot six films in New York City. "There are certain hot zones where a lot of movies shoot one after the other, and those neighborhoods get testy because they're tired of having film trucks on the street. But [the Mayor's Office] helps with that too. We shot in a hot zone in the West Village for *Kettle of Fish*, but we worked and parked our truck in a place that wasn't offensive to the block. Sure, if you want to shut down the FDR, there will be some amount of negotiation, but I've worked on bigger shoots and the city is fairly reasonable to work with."

The Mayor's Office has helped pull off a coup or two in its day. Remember the scene in *Vanilla Sky* (2001) where a confused Tom Cruise stumbles through an empty Times Square? They arranged that shoot. Or the footage in *The Interpreter* from inside in the United Nations? They did that too. In fact (just a little trivia), *The Interpreter* was the first film ever to gain access to the UN.

The permit process is simple. Just go online to www.nyc.gov/film, fill out the forms and turn them into the Mayor's Office of Film, Theatre, and Broadcasting in person. From there the Mayor's Office is at your service. "The indie film world began here," says Oliver. "And we are dedicated to supporting the industry." ★



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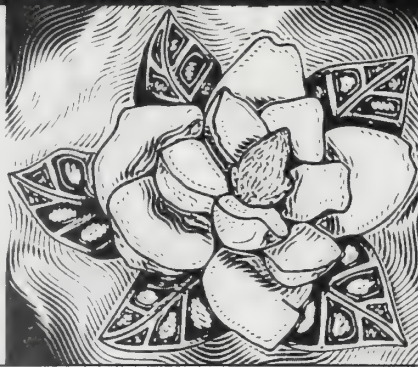
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After the

Michelle Byrd rebuilds IFP NY

By Elizabeth Angell

On a Monday afternoon last September, IFP Executive Director Michelle Byrd sat on a patch of industrial carpet by some pay phones outside a rest room in the Puck Building in downtown Manhattan. She was dressed in a smart black suit, and her cell phone buzzed frequently from the confines of her bag. Visitors to the bathroom brushed past her, and some were clearly surprised to find her in this odd spot. She was, after all, the doyenne of IFP's annual Market, the industry event being held upstairs. "You of all people should have a chair!" exclaimed one woman.

But if Byrd wanted to prove that the organization formerly known as IFP New York is thriving after its split from IFP LA (now Film Independent or FIND), she could ask for no better illustration than the fact that we could not find another quiet place to have a conversation. Upstairs the Market was bustling with producers and filmmakers and distributors all looking for future independent success stories. It was just four months after the LA branch's decision to go solo, but Byrd's organization remained intact, and she had the apparent support of her board and members.

"When something like this happens, there is a lot of soul searching," says Ira Deutchman, CEO of Emerging Pictures and chairman of the board of IFP. "Our board concluded that not only were we on the right track, but we were on the right track with the right leadership."

Byrd is now firmly at the helm of the 27-year-old IFP. Last spring, rumors began to circulate that IFP LA wasn't happy with the existing arrangement,



IFP Executive Director Michelle Byrd (photo by Tom LeGoff)

plan, and IFP LA seceded from the union. (Representatives from FIND declined to comment for this article.)

"The world of independent film has changed a lot in the last 25 years, and the independent community in Southern California has grown exponentially," wrote Dawn Hudson, FIND's executive director in her formal announcement to the members of the split. "With each IFP organization operating independently, we had no national structure for making decisions—yet we were bound by tradition and a common name to consult with each other and attempt to achieve consensus on many programs."

According to New York's leadership, many on the East Coast—and even in

the Midwest—agreed that LA needed to go its own way. "Over the years, the Los Angeles organization and the New York organization have focused on different aspects of the needs of independent

Split

filmmakers. It's not only caused confusion but a few incidences of banging into each other," says Deutchman. "I think everyone realizes, on both coasts, that this move is great. I think it's a revitalization for everyone."

which was a loose affiliation of the six chapters (LA, New York, Seattle, Chicago, Miami and Minneapolis/St. Paul). Each branch ran its own programs and raised its own funds, but there was an ongoing effort to offer some joint programs that would benefit all members. IFP LA had apparently raised the issue of reorganization with representatives from the other branches during a meeting in early 2005. They hoped to centralize IFP governance and programming under their own leadership. The other boards rejected that

Though the five remaining IFP branches will continue to be autonomous, charitable organizations each with their own leadership, boards, and development programs, IFP New York emerged as the clear leader of the group. It is now, in fact, just IFP; no need



Diane Weyermann and Nick Fraser on a panel at the 2005 IFP Market in New York
[photo courtesy of Edwin Pagán]

to specify place. "We are the mother-ship," says IFP board member Jeanne Berney with a laugh

For the time being, this arrangement suits the satellite chapters just fine. "We've always worked very closely with the New York chapter," says Jane Minton, executive director of IFP Minnesota. "And I like [the New York branch's] attitude; I like what they're saying. Our board said, 'let's try it this way, where it's top down.' We wanted to connect to the mission of the organization in a serious and meaningful way."

Though no one would go on record about exactly what the differences of opinion between LA and the rest of the IFP branches were—what issues had caused the branches to "bang" into each other—it is clearly more than just whether IFP would have a central hub. After the issue of leadership, it is this question of "mission" that seems to be at the core of the dissolution. "We're in a period of sharpening the definition of who it is we serve, how we serve them, and what's our mandate," says Byrd. "There's a reclaiming of what it means to be an IFP member."

In recent years, IFP LA had focused more and more of its energies on the Los Angeles Film Festival and the Independent Spirit Awards. New York, in contrast, does not run a film festival and the IFP Market held each September no longer even shows completed feature films. The Market was launched at a time when there were few venues for independent film; today there are countless theaters, museums, even cable channels. The Market now shows works in progress, giving producers a chance to scout future talents and projects. Five years ago, says Byrd, the Market had taken on the unpleasant odor of an also-ran to the Toronto International Film Festival. "Once we got away from completed work, then it became clear why they would come here," she says. "It's about the future, it's not about things that weren't good enough to be in Toronto."

The New York chapter runs on a considerably smaller budget and staff than IFP LA ever did, a circumstance that Byrd says she finds satisfying. "We can be very nimble," she notes. "We're not a massive monstrosity that can't move without 12 other moving parts also moving."

For all their differences of opinion on programming, both organizations have bowed to the pressure to glam up the sometimes shabby world of independent film, and both have been criticized for doing more to burnish their own star power than to serve the small-scale filmmaker.

FIND's Indie Spirits are a controversial event after *Sideways*, a critical and popular darling that cost \$18 million to make, was allowed into the \$15 million-and-under category last year. For its part, IFP has the Gotham Awards, a celebration of films that Byrd says are "authentic and filmmaker

driven." The Gothams, which will take place this year on November 30th, do not impose budget limits or other restrictions; any film, even a studio film, is eligible for consideration in their competitive categories. "I think 'independent' in the olden days may have meant something about the budget," says Byrd, "but now I think the word means something different to different people. It's like 'alternative;' it's subjective. If producers like Christine Vachon and Ted Hope self-identify as independent filmmakers, I don't think it's appropriate for our organization to try to invalidate how they view themselves."

All the IFP branches would probably benefit from a little glamour to polish up the more utilitarian of their programs. Directors labs and doc-making panels do not attract sponsorship or television coverage. While FIND appears to be pouring many resources into their pursuit of the glamorous, IFP may well be going a different route. Only time will tell. "We want to reach out to the next generation," says Byrd. "We're asking ourselves how do you foster those filmmakers and how do you encourage people to do things that are not so popular, to make difficult and challenging films." ★

Q&A

DAVID STRATHAIRN



By Rebecca Carroll

David Strathairn as Edward R. Murrow in *Good Night, and Good Luck* [Photo by Melinda Sue Gordon]

If you've seen a John Sayles movie, you know who David Strathairn is. Sadly, if you've not seen a John Sayles movie, you're much less likely to have ever even heard of David Strathairn. He's one of those I-know-I've-seen-him-somewhere actors that every once in a blue moon will pop up in a studio film like, say, *Losing Isaiah* (1995), but is more likely to be seen in an independent film you stumble across on the Sundance or IFC channels, or at a festival, which most likely will end up being the only place the film is ever screened. No matter where you end up catching a performance by Strathairn, when you do, it's hard not to be struck almost immediately by his dark good looks, his fierce intensity, and the fact that he is a wildly good actor.

During a press junket in September for the George Clooney-directed independent *Good Night, and Good Luck*, about the confrontation between CBS newscasters Edward R. Murrow and Senator Joseph McCarthy during the 1950s, I sat down with Strathairn to talk about what it was like to be Edward R. Murrow, how America thinks about television and film, and the virtues of pipe smoke.

Rebecca Carroll: The first thing I noticed when I was watching *Good Night, and Good Luck*—and it's probably because I just had a baby and had to quit smoking—is that there's a lot of smoking going on there. Real smoking?

David Strathairn: Yeah, you had to. You know what fake smoking looks like.

RC: Yeah, but there was a lot of smoking.

DS: Forget about it. It's just heinous.

RC: Are you a smoker?

DS: Nope.

RC: How did that work out?

DS: I couldn't not do it, especially for this guy [Edward R. Murrow]—you never saw him without one.

RC: Did it mess with your throat at all?

DS: I thought it was going to, but I didn't use regular cigarettes. I researched. I tried every possible kind knowing that I was going to have to smoke 20 or 30 a day.

RC: Wow.

DS: Yeah, one day I smoked 51 cigarettes. There were days when I smoked more. But one day I said, I'm going to count today. But I tried them all—herbal, Carltons, Kents, Pall Malls, Gauloises, Shermans—until someone said, "Why don't you try pipe tobacco?" It burns slower, it doesn't have 242 kinds of chemicals, and it smells better. And I found that to be true. It doesn't dig into you like cigarettes and cigars.

RC: Even when I was a smoker, I couldn't have been in such a closed space with everybody smoking at once—so for a nonsmoker, you pulled it off pretty well. But what a cool movie this is—although, I was thinking when I was watching it: How do we watch this movie without being cynical? The moral message is such a nice idea, and of course it comes at such an important time.

DS: Because it comes at an important time, we shouldn't be cynical about it. Murrow is still referred to today, and I think what kept him going was an innate hope that he would make a difference based on what he believed journalism should be. It's a nostalgic idea. Some people say the film is kind of sad—like something is lost. But it's not. I don't think it's cynical. You can say, "Yeah. Look at how you dropped the ball."

RC: I don't mean that the film itself is cynical. I mean that it's a very hopeful film and maybe sad, yes, but the fact that we think it's sad is cynical. Do you know what I'm saying?

DS: There you go—that it is lost. Yeah. Right on. That's true.

RC: Because Murrow did make a difference, but where do we look for evidence of that today?

DS: Well, there are people trying, I think. There's Bill Moyers' approach to

journalism, which is very similar to Murrow's in that he uses it to educate—tell a great story, but also educate.

RC: I think that what can happen, too, is that the educating becomes entertainment to a certain extent.

DS: Yes, that's absolutely true.

RC: When did that happen?

DS: Well, it started happening right there [in the film], when William Paley [the president of CBS from 1928 until 1946] made the decision that more people wanted to watch *I Love Lucy* more than they wanted to watch the senate sub-committee hearings—they don't want a civics lesson, they want to watch Jack Benny. Fine. And that's what's great about this film. It shows the collision of those two things. Murrow felt that television could be both entertaining and enlightening—that it should be both.

RC: There was a real palpable

camaraderie in the film—like you all were having a very good time.

DS: We were having a great time. It was like making news, but it was also like, you wanted to go to work.

RC: I get the sense that your career has kind of been like that. Like, you've wanted to go to work.

DS: For the most part, yeah.

RC: You've been in a number of John Sayles' films—when did your relationship with him start?

DS: We went to college together—I didn't really know him then, but came to know him about seven, eight years later at a summer theater. It's been great working with him, and it's so much fun. You get to go to the very place where the film takes place. Not in any studio. You're not in any other location that may look like the film. You go the coal mines of West Virginia [*Matewan*, 1987]. You go to the

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Bayou [*Passion Fish*, 1992]. You go to Alaska [*Limbo*, 1999].

RC: And he's such a great writer.

DS: Yeah, he's a great storyteller because he respects every character he creates.

RC: Kind of an obvious question, but I'm always interested in actors who work in both independent and studio films. How are the two experiences different for you?

DS: With bigger films, you definitely feel like you're sitting on a bench until they say, "Okay, now we need you, come in. Do your couple laps around the track." You don't feel as integrated into the community of the film as you do with independent films. Independent films become, familial might not be exactly right word, but you just feel that you're more in the mix than with larger films. But independent films have all the trappings of big budget films, they just don't have the big budget.

RC: So, as an actor, would you say that you approach both the same?

DS: Yeah. You approach your work the same.

RC: *Goodnight* imparts a lesson. As an actor, do you want to impart lessons for people to go away with?

DS: Well, film and television and theater are becoming our literature. You know, people don't read books. It's easier to turn on the television set or go see a film and have it told to you. And so it's the responsibility of people who are making film and television to understand that you are the literature. You are the thing that people learn about their culture from.

RC: Because there's no stopping that from happening? It's going to keep becoming more and more so the case, right?

DS: Well, great question. Because people get what they want. Or they get what they deserve. Or they get what they

sometimes unconsciously ask for. You can watch a reality show or a talk show, where people are dumping their dirty laundry out in public, or you can watch car chases. You watch what you want. But I think if you choose to be a voice for your particular culture, it's your responsibility to realize the power and the potential of it. Much as Murrow says [of television]: It can illuminate; it can educate. And it can inspire, but only to the ends to which people are determined to use it towards those ends. And you know, there's the rub right there.

RC: Do you think it's possible to create parity between the mediums of film and television, and literature?

DS: That's always a tough blend. I think it's a different psychological thing that we do when we read a book as opposed to when we see a movie. But I think yes, we can try to [create parity]. If you look at reality television, it is such a crass invention and irresponsible manipulation of what we are really searching for. Nevertheless, it's a glimpse into our

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psyche as a culture. Art does that, too. And art films, which is a horrendous term, or independent films, do it in a different way. Many filmmakers are discovering how to visually enthrall people so that they will be entertained, and then entertain the ideas that the film is entertaining them with.

RC: What I don't really understand is how, if we're looking for a glimpse into our psyche, why reality television prevails over an art exhibit or a book or a film that really will tell you some things? I just don't believe that it is because people are smarter or dumber necessarily. I'm not really clear on how that works.

DS: I'm not either. I have a crackpot idea about it, though. Film and television, and what literature used to be—novels and stories and then just those people sitting around the campfire telling the stories—were always a conduit, or the articulation of our egos. Our narcissism. We are such a narcissistic species. The most. People flock to films to try to see themselves. And since we are in our adolescence as a species—look at all the hormones going wild in the world—we are going after things as adolescents would. We're looking in someone's laundry bag and pulling out their dirty underwear, and we are looking to see how we love each other and how we kill each other. There's a thirst for everything, and it's like adolescent behavior.

RC: You know who would agree with you is Toni Morrison. She gave this really extraordinary commencement speech somewhere in which she was talking about just that—how we are always looking for the next ultimate cosmetic, the truly perfect diet. She said, and I quote, 'While children are being eroticized into adults, adults are being exoticized into eternal juvenilia...'—and that achieving adulthood is a difficult beauty.

DS: That's really beautiful. The thing about this movie—to apply this film to this kind of cock-a-mamie theory—there's such divisiveness today with



Matt Ross, David Strathairn, Tate Donovan and Reed Diamond in *Good Night, and Good Luck*
[Photo by Melinda Sue Gordon; Warner Independent Pictures]

everyone needing to be supported in his or her own particular belief. They go to the news that tells them what they want to hear. Murrow wanted to tell everybody what everybody needed to know so that they could develop an informed opinion. In December of every year, he would bring all the foreign correspondents to the CBS studios in New York, and they would sit down and do a broadcast under this gigantic map of the world. And he would say, "Okay, let's talk about what happened this year." That doesn't happen today. Everybody goes into his or her own corner, and the truth is so relative. So that's why I think art, and a film like this, does a real service.

RC: When I have conversations with friends about highbrow and lowbrow culture, I often hear the response: "People in middle America, you know, they live this way and they don't want to see independent films with real ideas." But how did that happen?

DS: I don't know. Someone told me the other day that they had read a statistic citing that in a survey across the country, 40 percent of biology teachers will

not teach evolution.

RC: I think that that might be true, actually.

DS: So that's how it happens. When you are a little kid, what do they teach you? Or how do they teach you? How are they teaching what they want you to know? Who wants you to know this? Why are you not being cut loose to go out and learn by yourself?

RC: Kind of scary. So what would you say is your favorite thing about what you do?

DS: Learning. You do a Chekhov play, and suddenly you learn about a part of Russian society in 1906. Or with [*Goodnight*], you learn about this period of history and the people—you put the microscope down into the details of what is going on there. That's also what I find really great about John Sayles' pictures—whatever the subject of the film is, you learn what it would mean politically and socially. And that's what art can do. It really can open up so many more windows objectively. ★

Film Sharing



Indies

make

headway on the digital
frontier



BY ELIZABETH ANGELL

Like any indie filmmaker worth his outsider cred, San Francisco-based director Caveh Zahedi makes movies that defy categorization. His most recent project, this year's *I Am a Sex Addict*, is a "true" story, an odyssey of self-revelation that blends documentary footage with scenes that feature actors reenacting episodes from Zahedi's life. Zahedi plays himself, both now and in the past.

Zahedi's maverick film is making the rounds at small festivals. It has had a few short runs in theaters, and he hopes to sign a DVD distribution deal soon. But, as any small-scale, essentially self-funded filmmaker knows, it's hard for Zahedi to reach his audience—whoever they are, wherever they are—in the short window that festivals and short-run theatrical distribution provides. If his film doesn't catch on with its limited audience while the movie is up on screens, then *I Am a Sex Addict* is likely to remain obscure. Even Zahedi's small cadre of established fans risk missing it.

To solve this problem, Zahedi has turned to the frontier of film distribution: video on demand (VOD). Through the subscription-based DVD-by-mail and VOD company, GreenCine, his films are available online to anyone with a membership who cares to download his catalogue of movies and watch them on a

computer screen—*Sex Addict* will soon be added to the list. On GreenCine, his films can take their time attracting a following; the film will never leave the theater or be yanked from the shelves of the video store. "There is an audience for these films," he says. "And it can be as small as it needs to be, and it can take a long time to grow."

For Zahedi, the advantages of VOD go a step further than finding his niche: He did not have to invest any of his money upfront to see his films uploaded onto GreenCine's site. Not a penny of his limited budget was spent producing DVDs or designing clever packaging. "VOD is cheaper and simple and more environmentally sound," he says.

Video on demand has long been the promise of the Internet. Since the inception of online commerce, forecasters have sworn that inexpensive digital content download was just around the corner. "There's the school of thought that if you can consume it digitally, then it's only a matter of time until digital consumption is inevitable," says Burgess Wilson, vice president of Business Development for Image Entertainment, an independent film distributor, and its digital subsidiary, Egami Media. "Long term, we don't think digital consumption will be incremental. We think it will be a fundamental shift."



Caveh Zahedi's most recent project *I Am a Sex Addict*
[photo courtesy of Zahedi]

For 15 years, of course, that promise has gone largely unfulfilled. But insiders maintain that VOD's time has finally come, and filmmakers who ignore the potential of digital distribution do so at their own risk. "A year ago at this time, there was no buzz, no talk," says Wilson. "But now it's all everyone talks about in the trade press and at conferences. It's ramped up very, very quickly."

Several factors are feeding this digital "buzz." The first is a need for some good news. Box office receipts this summer were abysmal—a fact that most industry watchers attribute to a disappointing slate of movies but that others suspect may be the inevitable result of presenting moviegoers with too many choices.

Instead of sitting in a theater, they can watch hundreds of cable channels, play games, or sample their DVD library. Perhaps they're finally choosing to do something other than visit the multiplex. DVD sales have also slowed down in recent months. After years of double-digit growth, the market seems close to saturation. DVD sales account for almost half of all studio revenues, but the numbers are no longer exploding.

Second, it looks like the younger generation is primed for an active digital marketplace. After all, they've been downloading music now for more than half a decade, and last year, the peer-to-peer software BitTorrent swept through the internet. Designed by a young entrepreneur named Bram Cohen,



Filmmaker Caveh Zahedi makes movies that defy categorization

BitTorrent allows users to share massive digital files easily. The software breaks down films into manageable chunks and then allows users to download those chunks simultaneously, alleviating the agonizing wait for a movie to make its way through the pipes onto your hard drive. The software mandates that every user download and upload simultaneously, so the more users, the faster the entire network. Suddenly, the old barriers to downloading movie clips, games, episodes of TV shows, and even entire feature-length films were suddenly gone. Some analysts estimated that BitTorrent traffic accounted for a third of all sent data last year.

As with the file-sharing programs that rocked the music industry, BitTorrent scares the studios and major distributors. The Motion Picture Association of America has seen to it that dozens of "Torrent" sites are shut down. But the fact remains that young people are ready and willing to watch movies as digital files on their computers, just as they gave up buying CDs in favor of an iPod [see page TK] and online music malls.

The third important factor fueling the talk of a VOD revolution is technology itself. Hardware advances may have finally caught up to the hype. Consumers today have internet connections capable of handling massive downloads. "Most households are broadband households. There's more broadband now than dial up," says Bruce Eisen, president of CinemaNow, one of the first companies to devote itself exclusively to digital distribution.

A slew of new hardware is also about to hit the market. Skeptics have always maintained that movie lovers would not want to watch films on their computer; they were probably

right. Now, tech companies are hoping they have the goods to convince consumers to buy new devices that will link their TVs to their PCs or, better yet, funnel downloads directly into their televisions.

The final component is content. Millions of paying customers will soon have both high-speed internet connections and shiny new boxes on top of the televisions, and everyone interviewed for this article is vying to have a healthy library of titles for them to access. GreenCine, CinemaNow, and Egami are just a few of the companies who hope to be players; the bigger names—from Netflix and Blockbuster, Wal-Mart and Amazon, to the studios—are no doubt already planning to make their presence felt in the digital marketplace.

To be sure, industry types have heard all this before. "The road from here to there is paved with expensive technology challenges and rights challenges," says Ted Sarandos, chief content officer of Netflix. "All that still has to be worked out."

Bo Peabody, a venture capitalist who has funded companies hoping for a piece of the action, argues that the public is not quite ready for all that new technology. "The incentive to upgrade your TV is just not that big yet," he says. "In order for me to want to go out and buy a \$500 TV, I've got to be sure it works. You're going to get the early adopters and then they have to show the followers and then it'll trickle down. It's going to take time. There's a lot of hardware that has to get bought and updated before we're going to switch over."

Boosters say all these "ifs" make this the perfect moment to get in on VOD. "To date we've made very little money from VOD, but we wanted to be in on the beginning of something," says Alex Afterman, founder of Heretic Films, an independent distribution company that specializes in horror, cult, and exploitation films. No one wants to be the last to arrive at the party, for fear that there won't be any room left. "You can't wait until [the VOD market has] matured, because then it's too late," says Wilson.

Others are now learning what Zahedi has known for a while: VOD is a cheap experiment. "The barriers to entry for digital are still low today because you don't have the commitment to physical goods," says Wilson. "You don't have to press a certain amount [of DVDs], store them, ship them, deal with returns. All you have to do is ship [the digital file] to a server, market it, and promote it. Right now it's a land grab, but it will level off."

Price structure is one of the unanswered questions that pops up during any conversation about VOD. No one is quite sure what to charge for a digital download. "We call it the Wild West," says Wilson, "because no model has been established yet."

Ira Deutchman, CEO of Emerging Pictures, agrees: "I think we're going to see a lot of experimentation when it comes to price. Right now, for the most part, people are giving [content] away which doesn't do anyone any good. All they're really proving is that the technology works and people might tune in. The next step is going to be about who can harness this in a productive way."

One of the next questions that will need to be answered is in what form, exactly, consumers will want their digital movie downloads. Will they want to buy films and store them forever on a hard drive at home, or will they choose to "rent" VOD and watch a movie within a certain period of time, the way many pay-per-view channels work today? Independent distributors are betting that subscription services, similar to the one pioneered by Netflix, will suit their audience best.

"Ultimately, I don't know what's going to happen, but I am very strong proponent of the idea that subscription VOD is the killer application for independent film," says Deutchman. "If you think about the way that most people consume television, with a clicker in their hands, they only stay with something if it really jumps out at them. But independent film is not sticky like that. People who aren't familiar with an independent film probably aren't going to be grabbed by it."

Deutchman believes that like the DVD-by-mail services, VOD will help expand the audience for independent film.

Bosko says he will be glad to see short films get the attention they deserve. "It's always been a tough market for shorts," he notes. "They're a great training ground and great for festivals, but then what do you do? Now all of a sudden there's a new market for them."

As all these possibilities begin to sort themselves out, filmmakers are left to ponder the implications for the long-term. For the foreseeable future, studios will continue to invest huge amounts of money in the full range of distribution options: from theatrical to DVD and VOD. But what about the indies? Should they still pursue time on the big screen? "I get a filmmaker a week trying to hold out for theatrical, and I try to discourage them," says Bosko, who works as a marketing and distribution strategist to indie filmmakers through his company, the Bosko Group. He warns that filmmakers must invest huge amounts of money in promotion to make a theatrical release worthwhile. "Even with films that do well, the filmmakers break even at best," he notes. "For all the humping and work involved, it's not worth it."

He does concede however, that "there are still a lot of labels and DVD distributors who want to say 'theatrical release' on the box."

Eisen agrees that a theatrical release will no longer be mandatory. "I think content will be produced specifically for the VOD market," he says. To some degree, that prediction has already



"The incentive to upgrade your TV is just not that big yet."

—Bo Peabody



Netflix and its kin have made independent films available to many people who could not see offbeat films in their local theaters or were limited to the titles stocked at their local Blockbuster. VOD may similarly expand their palette. "If people can watch what they want, when they want, then [VOD] will grow the market for independent film," says Deutchman.

Digital content on demand may also benefit the makers of short films. Analysts say that mobile phones, as well as televisions, will be prime places for storing and watching video, and short-format work is perfect for those tiny screens. "People have started watching films on phones already," says Mark Bosko, author of *The Complete Independent Movie Marketing Handbook* and the upcoming *DVD On Demand*. "There are services already buying up catalogues and buying rights to short films."

come true: *Dark Town*, a low-budget, independent horror film that was released last year exclusively on VOD was one of the top-grossing films in that format. It beat out many better-known titles that had done time in a theater.

No need to mourn the end of the movie theater quite yet, particularly if you're not a 15-year-old playing video games on your cell phone. "People are still going to go to theatres," says Deutchman. "It'll just be the older generation who still have a sense of a movie theater as a destination. I don't know what it'll mean for studios, but I think it's going to be very good news for independents. People will want to go out and see a good movie."

Pretty soon, the movie theater will be the only place left where you won't have unlimited choice. It might just be a relief. ★



BY ETHAN ALTER

FALLING Down

Ask any independent filmmaker how they got their first movie made and you're sure to hear a great story. Kevin Smith maxed out his credit cards to pay for *Clerks* (1994), Quentin Tarantino's *Reservoir Dogs* (1992) script found its way into Harvey Keitel's hands, and Robert Rodriguez sold his body to medical science to cover the 1992 *El Mariachi*'s \$7,000 budget. As for Matt Tauber, writer and director of the upcoming feature *All Fall Down...* well, he sent an email. That may not sound very impressive at first, but reserve your judgment until you've heard the whole tale. In March 2004, Tauber was working as a producer on the Maggie Gyllenhaal film *The Great New Wonderful* directed by his friend and producing partner Danny Leiner. "Because it was a low-budget movie, I shared an office with the film's accountant who was working for maybe \$100 a day," he remembers. This underpaid numbers cruncher regularly overheard Tauber trying to drum up more money to finance *Wonderful*. "One day he turned to me and said, 'Have you ever thought about contacting Mark Cuban?'"

An unusual upswing for one indie filmmaker—thanks to HDNet Films

A brief pause here for station identification. Mark Cuban, of course, is the media-savvy billionaire businessman and outspoken owner of the Dallas Mavericks basketball team. More importantly, he is the co-founder of 2929 Entertainment, the company that owns the Landmark Theaters chain as well as the high-definition satellite television network HDNet. Along with his business partner Todd Wagner, Cuban steadily moved more



Viola Davis as Tonya in *All Fall Down* directed by Matt Tauber [photo by Macall Polay/HDNet Films]

into film production, launching HDNet Films in 2003. Under the guidance of Jason Kliot and Joana Vicente, who produced such well-received pictures as *Chuck & Buck* (2000) and *Lovely & Amazing* (2001), the production arm of HDNet planned to finance at least eight narrative films and four documentaries a year, all of them shot on high-definition video and none exceeding a budget of \$2 million. The company's first release, *Enron: The Smartest Guys in the Room*, bowed this past spring to positive reviews and a strong box-office.

Considering Cuban's stature in the media world, it's understandable why Tauber wasn't exactly sold on his accountant's suggestion. "I asked him if he knew Mark Cuban, and he said no, but that he had his email address. I asked, 'How did you get his email address?' And he said that it was shown on *Best Damn Sports Show Period* the other night." Thinking nothing would come of it, Tauber gave the accountant the OK to send Cuban an email about *The Great New Wonderful*. "Four hours later we got an email back from Will Battersby, the director of development at HDNet Films, saying that Mark Cuban had passed our letter along to him and that they wanted to discuss the project further."

Ultimately, HDNet didn't sign on to produce *The Great New Wonderful* ("It just didn't work out," Tauber says), but Tauber struck up a friendship with Battersby and eventually decided to

pass him the script for his own film, *All Fall Down*. A probing familial drama about class and race-relations set in the suburbs and projects of Chicago, the film wasn't exactly mainstream material. But that's precisely why HDNet was interested in the project. "It's a movie that almost no one in this country would make," Kliot says proudly. "And we want to make movies that other people wouldn't because we can."

All Fall Down began its life as a play entitled *The Architect*, which Tauber first encountered at the Edinburgh Theater Festival in the mid-90s. Written by Scottish playwright David Greig, *The Architect* dealt in part with the problems of public housing in modern-day Glasgow. At the time, Tauber was living in Chicago, and he was struck by the socio-economic similarities between the two cities. After getting Greig's blessing to transform the play into a feature film set in Chi-town, the aspiring filmmaker spent the next seven years slaving over the script; he even traveled to Sundance Institute in 2002 to workshop it in the Screenwriters Lab. "That was an amazing experience, both as a practical and inspirational source for developing the material," he says. "I think the world of that organization." By 2004, Tauber had a finished screenplay, which revolved around a well-to-do architect in suburban Chicago whose life is thrown into turmoil when he is confronted by an activist resident of a South Side housing project that he designed several years before.

Originally intended to provide the poor with a decent place to live, the buildings have instead become magnets for criminals and drug dealers. This professional failure reverberates at home, where the architect finds his relationship to his wife and children growing increasingly strained.

Seven years is a long time to be living with one script, but all that effort clearly paid off, as it was the strength of the writing that convinced HDNet to fund the movie. "We read Matt's script and knew we had to make this film," Kliot says. "With us, it's all about quality. We believe that quality scripts will attract a quality cast and crew." Kliot's mantra was proven correct when Anthony LaPaglia, Viola Davis, and Isabella Rossellini all signed on to play leading roles after reading the screenplay. Directing such a seasoned trio of actors would be a daunting challenge for any filmmaker, particularly one making his feature debut. But according to Tauber, each of the performers came prepared to serve the material. "Every actor in this movie had a real appreciation and reverence for their individual characters and the story as a whole," he says. "As a result there was a level of commitment and professionalism that was really inspiring."

Tauber's script was instrumental in bringing another high-profile name aboard the project: veteran cinematographer John Bailey. "I've always been attracted to movies that deal with characters in crisis, particularly in the context of a nuclear family," says Bailey, whose credits include *As Good as It Gets* (1997) and *Ordinary People* (1980)—which Tauber is quick to cite as one of his favorite movies. "And that's what this film does. Unlike so many stories that deal with race relations in a confrontational manner, this is a project that's very human and very honest. It's a film that deals with race in a non-confrontational, non-violent way, and I think we need more movies that tackle these issues in that spirit."

In signing on, Bailey knew that he would be working on a limited pre-production schedule with a novice director. But the two hit it off right away, and Tauber was eager to learn everything he could from his DP. "As a first time filmmaker whose background is in theater, I find that I'm very connected to the story and the characters' emotional experience," he explains. "I can articulate all of that very well to John, but I can't always articulate the best way to communicate that visually. Sometimes I'll have ideas that inspire John and then he takes them to the finish line. More often than not, it's John introducing an idea and us bouncing it back and forth. And whenever there's a



Isabella Rossellini in Matt Tauber's *All Fall Down* [photo by Macall Polay/HDNet Films]

standstill, I'm able to unlock the answer by telling John what I want the audience to feel, and he helps me find a way to translate that feeling into visual terms."

"I feel extraordinarily privileged to be working this way," Tauber continues. "Every director can track back to that moment when they first decided to become a filmmaker and for me it was seeing *Ordinary People* as a kid. That's when I learned that I want to make people feel how that movie made me feel. So to work with John now is unbelievable." For his part, Bailey is pleased that Tauber is more interested in his characters than in the camera. "When I talk to students, I always tell them 'Please don't get lost in the technology.' It really isn't that important. It's much more important to understand your material inside and out the way Matt does and to be able to articulate that to your DP."

All Fall Down was filmed over the summer in a marathon 21-day shoot with New York standing in for Chicago. Tauber had initially hoped to make the movie in the Windy City, but that would have pushed the movie over HDNet's \$2 million limit. Fortunately, production scouts found a Staten Island neighborhood that made a convincing substitute for the North Shore suburbs, and the Bronx doubled for the South Side. In addition, Tauber was able to take a crew to Chicago for two days of exterior shooting. The tight production schedule left little margin for error or experimentation, which the director felt some regret about later on. ("You always want more choices in the editing room," he says now.) Despite the intense pace, filming went

smoothly. A visit to the Staten Island set one sweltering July afternoon found the cast and crew in good spirits even though they knew they were in for a long shoot. Not only was it their final 24 hours at this location, but Rossellini had to be wrapped by the end of the day. Tauber seemed to be taking the stress in stride though, which pleased his pal Leiner, a producer on *All Fall Down*. "It's nice to see him doing so well," he says. "This is an ambitious movie that's being made under hard conditions, and he's handling it with grace." The actors were equally complimentary. "The great thing about first-time directors is that they are totally into the acting," says Davis, who plays the activist that confronts the architect (LaPaglia) about the sorry state of his housing project. "Matt wants to make each scene good—he's not just trying to get the shot."

Speaking again a few weeks after shooting wrapped, Tauber was happy to report that the film finished on time and under budget—a nice accomplishment for a first-time director. Still, there's a part of him that can't help but wish he had had more time both in pre-production and during filming. "With our time frame, we were kind of locked in to some of the choices we made. Coming from the school of theater, I generally like to create an environment for creative discourse, but there just wasn't time for that here. I learned very quickly that I had to communicate specifically what I was looking for to the cast and crew," he says.

To a certain extent, Tauber's directorial decisions were also determined by technology. *All Fall Down* was shot on a Sony HDW-F900 (also known as the CineAlta), a top-of-the-line high-definition digital camcorder. "It's really the only usable camera for small productions," says Bailey, adding that the CineAlta's only competition would be the Panasonic Varicam. "That one is more compact. The Sony is bigger and not particularly flexible." Flexibility is another thing that Tauber wishes he had had more of during the shoot. "It would have been nice to have a camera that was a little more facile," he admits. "We would have been more mobile and would have been able to work a little faster. But at the same time, would we have as beautiful an image if we had used another camera? The film looks incredible, so I really can't have any regrets in that regard."

Kliot, for one, hopes that audiences will notice the superior image quality, not just in *All Fall Down*, but in every HDNet production. "The first stage of the digital revolution was using any kind of digital mechanism you could to make a movie that would be acceptable to viewers," he says. "When Joana and I made *Chuck & Buck* and *Lovely & Amazing*, there were limitations to what the image quality could accomplish. You couldn't make a movie without people knowing you were making a low-budget digital movie. We didn't want to do that anymore. At HDNet, we're making movies—not low-budget movies, not digital movies—we're making movies. And we're making them for far less than anyone in Hollywood. You'll see it in the films

we put out there. No one is going to say, 'Oh, that's just a digital movie.'"

In addition to *All Fall Down*, the company has four narrative films in the can, three of which premiered at the Toronto International Film Festival in September. The highest-profile title is Steven Soderbergh's *Bubble*, the first in a series of six films that the sought-after director will direct for HDNet. Also on their release slate is the offbeat comedy *One Last Thing* starring Cynthia Nixon, the terrorist-themed drama *The War Within*, and *Diggers*, a '70s-era film about clam diggers on Long Island with Paul Rudd and Maura Tierney. "Our mission statement is 'no limits,'" Kliot remarks about this varied line-up. "We're open to anything. We're basically going for movies that we want to make and we want to see."

According to Tauber, who is currently in week two of his 15-week post-production schedule, the plan is to have *All Fall Down* ready for the 2006 Sundance Film Festival. A national release date has yet to be determined, but when it does open, the film will follow the unique distribution pattern of every HDNet release. On the same day the movie opens in theaters, it will also air on the HDNet network. "This is kind of taboo in Hollywood," Kliot says. "Certain art chains will not show independent movies if they are also shown on cable." It's a good thing then that Cuban and Wagner own the Landmark Theater chain, guaranteeing that HDNet's movies will always get a theatrical release and that profits will flow directly back to 2929 Entertainment. In Kliot's opinion, this set-up is the "only working model I've encountered for low-budget independent movies. Simply financing features for an independent production company is a really bad proposition; you're going to lose money even if your movie is successful because you're not partaking in the entire chain of revenue. In this case, even if we don't make breakout hits, we're making money for Landmark, 2929 Entertainment, and Mark and Todd in general. I'm excited because I can make a feature or documentary and not have to worry about it being the next *Clerks* or *Blair Witch Project* every time."

While Tauber is also excited to be a part of this new indie distribution model, he's primarily pleased that HDNet gave him the chance to finally realize his pet project onscreen. "Having lived with it in your imagination for so long, seeing *All Fall Down* fully realized is kind of an awesome experience," says the newly minted indie filmmaker, adding that he's currently working on another film script and might direct a play sometime next year. "It still doesn't dawn on me sometimes. The other day, I was looking at some footage, and I noticed a blouse that one of the young actresses was wearing. My first thought was 'Oh, maybe I picked the wrong shirt for her.' And then it sunk in: It's done. She's wearing that shirt for eternity. It's strange to have that finality after so many years of limitless imagination."★

BY DEREK LOOSVELT

For years, digital cameras and post-production equipment have been changing the way films are budgeted, shot, and edited. But no matter how films are made today, theatergoers still watch them on 35 millimeter celluloid prints. Even when a film is shot on high-definition video, the distributor has to copy the master onto celluloid before sending it to a theater. Film projectors and the process of printing and shipping prints—a financial line item costing distributors \$1 billion annually—have been more or less the same for nearly a century.

But this is all about to change. In the past few months, US distributors have begun to replace physical thirty-five millimeter prints with digital bit streams, which can be beamed to studios by satellite and then shown using digital projectors, devices expected to spell the end of bulky canisters and reels of film. Also gone will be pops and jiggles on the screen as well as dirt and scratches that celluloid collects after several uses. Most important, the advent of digital projection means distribution costs will plummet, bringing down budgets, which will free up billions of dollars each year to produce additional content and significantly reduce the price of placing big- and low-budget films in theaters. According to *Screen Digest*, if all of the approximately 100,000 screens in the world went digital, distributors could save over \$2 billion a year.

Given the huge cost savings, it might be surprising to learn that digital projection technology has been available for many years. But what stalled the transition was finding an answer to an economic question: Who'll pay for it?

Nearly all of the financial advantages of moving to digital projection go straight into distributors' pockets, with little if any



THINKING OUT

benefit going to theaters. Understandably, theaters figured ticket sales wouldn't increase much if films were shown digitally rather than on celluloid. Studios, meanwhile, didn't want to foot the bill for installing servers and projectors, which cost up to \$100,000, nor did they want the responsibility of upgrading and maintaining the new equipment. Theaters, in turn, were weary of getting hammered with replacement costs caused by inevitable innovations that would make equipment obsolete.

To address these and other issues related to the digital transition, Digital Cinema Initiatives (DCI), a consortium of seven Hollywood studios along with theater owners and tech manufacturers, was created in 2002.

DCI's first order of business, before discussing any economic details, was addressing picture quality. According to Charles S. Swartz, executive director and CEO of the Entertainment Technology Center, a research unit at USC within the School of Cinema-Television where DCI conducted its research, "No one wanted to step back. Sure, prints get scratched and dirty and break, but when they look good, they really look good. The image in digital had to equal or excel what film, at its best, can create. All the testing we did was subject to that underlying premise." Thanks to Texas Instruments technology, specifically TI's 2K chip, comprised of 2,048 horizontal mirrors and 1,080 vertical rows or lines, Swartz and DCI were able to meet their



What happens when 35mm goes digital?

INSIDE THE CAN

aesthetic goals.

In addition to the 2K technology, which most digital projectors use today, Swartz notes, "Now we also have the possibility of 4K projectors, with a lot of promise to reach even higher resolution, which might be good in certain situations, but resolution alone isn't the only factor that makes a satisfactory image. Contrast and color saturation are equally important."

This past July, three years after its inception, DCI unveiled version 1.0 of its uniform specifications for digital projection, outlining standards for debated issues such as file resolutions, compression formats, and security requirements. The specs also ensured that replacements costs and upgrades would be mostly



Handheld portable video player by Creative Zen Vision; (top) Charles S. Swartz, executive director/CEO Entertainment Technology Center at USC [Sarah Abrams Char]



CP2000 Digital Cinema Projector by Christie Digital

avoided, and gave control of the data produced by digital projectors to theater owners, who didn't want studios to have access to information such as exactly when a film played, which could allow a distributor to interfere with theaters' decisions like moving a poorly attended film to a smaller theater.

However, notably absent from DCI's 1.0 release was any mention of who would pay for the transition, leading many insiders to believe the transition still stood at a stalemate.

While DCI unveiled its specs on the West Coast, overseas the transition to digital projection was already well on its way. In the UK, with the economic backing of the UK Film Council, a government entity, over 200 theaters were being outfitted with digital projectors. In Ireland, with the help of Avica Technology Corporation, a California-based digital exhibition company, every one of the country's 515 screens were in the middle of a similar process, though funded by private entities rather than public organizations.

Using its European arm, Avica raised 40 million largely through third-party investors. The company is providing projectors to theaters on a custodial basis, planning to recoup its costs from distributors, which Avica hopes will hand over the many they currently put towards printing and shipping film—no official deal to do so is in place. If all goes as planned, though, neither the distributor nor the theater will have incurred any cost increases during the transition to digital and, after the switch has been made, distributing costs will go down significantly.

According to Swartz, similar deals are the wave of the future in the US, where the transition to digital is gaining traction. The switch won't involve government intervention, of course, but instead will occur through the free market. "Third-party entities seem to be the formula," says Swartz, pointing to film labs or companies like Kodak and others involved in the business of providing images as possible initiators.

One company in the US pushing the switch to digital is networking company Access Integrated Technology (AIX), which last June partnered with one of the leading digital projector manufacturers, Christie Digital Systems. Christie/AIX has since committed to bringing digital cinema to more than 2,500 US screens in the next two years. A few months before the Christie/AIX announcement, Landmark Theaters jumped into the digital projection pool, promising to move to digital formats in all its 59 theaters using Sony's 4K projectors, which incorporate design specifications compatible with DCI's guidelines. Another significant deal came this past September, when Disney revealed that its distribution arm Buena Vista Pictures Distribution had entered into a non-exclusive agreement to supply feature films to DCI-compliant Christie/AIX digital projection systems. The announcement, the first of its kind, is expected to be followed by similar ones from other studios, setting the stage for the demise of celluloid prints.

With the transition achieving momentum in the US, Swartz says there's a strong motivation for it to happen quickly, because, in the short term, while the changeover is occurring, distribution costs will actually increase. Distributors will have to support two separate inventories: film and digital files. As a result, Swartz predicts that by the end of the year, hundreds of screens will be equipped with the new projectors. (As of last July, less than 100 out of a total of about 35,000 screens in the US were equipped.) By the end of 2005, he says that number should rise into the thousands. And by the end of 2007, it could be in the tens of thousands. "We'll see it everywhere," he says. "In North America, in Europe, in Asia. The numbers are huge."

Once firmly in place in theaters, digital projection will not only change how we watch content but also what we watch. Paul Boutin, a *Wired* contributing editor and technology columnist for Slate.com, predicts, "It'll be easier to try new things to see if they work or not." Will theaters beam in the next U2 tour or World Cup match? "I don't know," he says, "but it's almost a given that we'll see a lot of experimenting. At first, a lot of the experiments will be dumb, but eventually theaters will figure out what works."

Birth of the Portable Video Player

Lately, no one has figured out what works for consumers better than Apple, which in September, introduced the latest iPod spawn called the iPod nano, a slimmed-down, super-sleek version of Apple's ubiquitous portable music player. On the same day, Apple also revealed it had partnered with Motorola to produce the ROKR, a cell phone that doubles as an iPod, albeit one that can store just 100 songs versus iPod nano's 1,000-song

holding power and the 60GB iPod's 15,000. In the world of portable music players, there's no competition: Apple's on top with no one close behind. But in the world of portable video players, with Apple still nowhere to be found, the field's wide open.

"It's like California right before the Gold Rush," says Peter Rojas, a tech contributor to *Wired*, the *New York Times*, and *Fortune*, as well as editor-in-chief of Engadget, an online magazine that covers personal technology. "Everyone's waiting for Apple to create the platform, but it doesn't look like they're going to have anything anytime soon." Will anyone beat Apple to the punch? "I don't think so," says Rojas. "But I wish someone would get their act together."

There have been some impressive recent releases, though. Unveiled this past summer, Creative's Zen Vision is "the biggest device out there for the fall," says Rojas. "Creative really gets it down." He also points to Sony's PlayStation Portable as another decent handheld. "It's vastly underrated as a portable video device," he says. "Millions and millions are selling. A lot of people are buying them as game devices but carrying them around as video devices. People have realized it has a beautiful screen."

Maybe Apple is trying to say something through its silence. With respect to handheld video devices' popularity, some insiders think the devices will never be a mass phenomenon, that there'll never be vast numbers of people who'll want to carry around a small screen to watch a movie, even a short. "That might be a fair thing to say," says Rojas. "But it's largely culturally specific. People who say portable video devices are never going to happen have never been to Seoul."

Because so much of commuting in the US takes place in automobiles, audio media takes precedence here: You can listen to audio while driving, but you can't drive while watching a video. Which is why portable video devices in train-commuting cultures such as Japan and Korea have caught on. Rojas adds that in Asia, people are "slightly ahead of the curve. They're already using portable video in large numbers, and they've been e-mailing and taking pictures using cell phones for years. They're even watching videos on cellular devices." He predicts that this phenomenon will soon take off in the US, opening new venues for filmmakers. "Large numbers of cell phones will be video enabled," he says, noting that cell phone film festivals have already been staged in the US, and companies such as Nokia and Verizon are supporting short-form content.

But not too many people are currently creating content for the format. "The audience is there to be exploited," says Rojas, "and there's a dearth of really good content being delivered over the internet and via wireless." There are complicating factors involved in doing so, though, such as the difficulty of sending and downloading video to cell phones and the fact that you can't legally rip a DVD to a video handheld like you can a song to an iPod.

At USC's Entertainment Technology Center, Swartz has performed initial studies to understand how people respond to portable video players. "As a category, they'll definitely take off," he says, adding that they'll be used for a variety of purposes, including watching movies outside the home in, say, a doctor's



Directors at ShoWest Ready for 3D (l-r) George Lucas, Robert Zemeckis, Randal Kleiser, Robert Rodriguez, James Cameron
[photo courtesy of Boyd MacNaughton of NuVision]

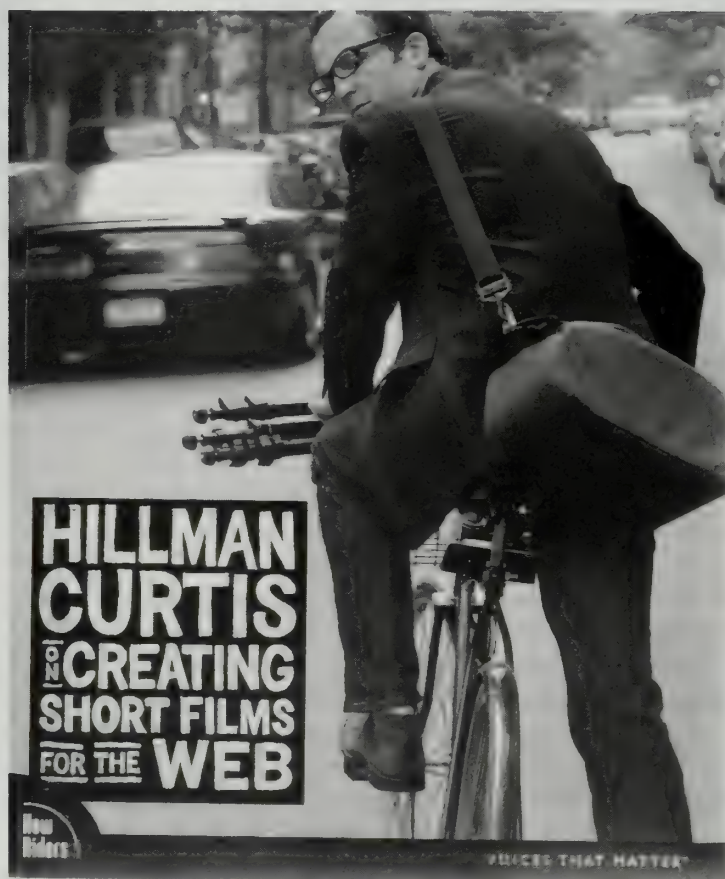
office waiting room. "On a five-inch screen, you likely won't want to watch *Lawrence of Arabia*," he says, "but you might watch a Bill Murray comedy, and though it would suffer somewhat, you could still find it to be a very enjoyable experience." Indeed, comedy rather than dark drama or horror would translate better to the smaller screen, especially because viewing on portables largely takes place in bright environments. (*The Blair Witch Project* probably wouldn't be very scary on a five-inch LCD.) Additionally, the devices would lend themselves to content in which you can dip in and out, as well as to short-form content. Made-for-TV video, not as visually-oriented as that made for the big screen, would also be user-friendly. Swartz points out that because portable video devices will at some point in their lives likely be tethered to stationary devices to download content, you might find developments such as kiosks at Starbucks, where, while waiting for your espresso to drip, you could plug in and download a movie, which you could then take home and watch on your 60-inch LCD TV.

To independent filmmakers, this means an increase in outlets and the possibility of bypassing the costly distribution phase. "If a movie's good," says Boutin, "it can get around by word of mouth. People might even download a movie widely enough that a theatrical distributor will want to pick it up."

That said, there was a lot of speculation and forecasting that independent music groups would get picked up by major labels because of their internet play—and that hasn't happened. "In music, I haven't seen anybody getting rich without the marketing power of big labels," admits Boutin, "so I assume that same thing would apply to filmmakers. They would just be getting more people to see their movie. The big question is, 'Would this then make it easier for them to get backing for their next project?'"

It also remains to be seen whether portable video devices will follow the iPod philosophy—do one thing very well—say, improving upon the portable DVD player, or go the multi-platform route, possibly combining game-playing, Wi-Fi, and video capabilities. Swartz points to the clock radio as a potential model. "That's my iconic device," he says, "because it adds one and one and gets three. As a clock, it does its job very well, and as a radio, it does its job well. Plus, it has a third function, it wakes you up to the radio. That's something you can't do with two separate devices, even if they operate perfectly." ★

The World Wild Web



Hillman Curtis' new media project journal

By Brandon Hopkins

Hillman Curtis on Creating Short Films for the Web, by Hillman Curtis, New Riders, 224 pages

Award-winning graphic designer and new media guru Hillman Curtis's latest offering is a project journal—cum—artist's statement thinly disguised as a digital video primer. As a technical guide, *Hillman Curtis on Creating Short Films for the Web* (the title is as much a mouthful as that of his last book, *MTV: Process, Inspiration, and Practice for the New Media Designer*, also published by New Riders) leaves much to be desired. But as the collected experiences of an exceptional talent braving the frontier of web-based digital video production, it is worthy of attention.

Touching on a broad range of genres, Curtis's handsomely produced book covers several of his projects from 2001 to the present, including a series of video

portraits, a study in movement set to Mogwai's "Golden Porsche," and his "60 Seconds with..." series filmed for RollingStone.com, as well as an interview with designer James Victore, two experiments in nonlinear storytelling, and a short narrative, "Film on Film," which Curtis wrote and produced.

The strongest technical section of the book is contributor Jens Loeffler's appendix, "Why Flash Video?" which provides instruction for using the application as a web-based video player. (Readers of this magazine will note that David Alm, a contributing editor at *The Independent*, also helped with the book.) But the chapter on "Getting Started" is perfunctory and far too short on details to serve as a guide for the uninitiate. Despite the book's short index, there is no convenient organization to the instructional components. Indeed, Curtis's discussions of the book's initial conception suggest that he

never intended it to be a reference manual. His appeal for artists to put their hearts into everything they do is the real message, and it's not long before the reader understands that little direct technical instruction should be expected.

Though some may be surprised by the naïveté he exhibits in his new role as filmmaker, Curtis makes no bones about being a neophyte. Recounting how he interviewed the band Sum 41 near an open window above a busy Manhattan street using only his camera's built-in microphone, he admits being surprised to discover in post-production that the audio was practically unusable. Sagely he concludes that it might be a good idea to use a unidirectional mic and headphones, and to check the sound quality while filming... One routinely gets the sense that at least the biggest directorial blunders could have been avoided had Curtis consulted a guide. And fledgling film-

makers with a small project or two under their belts will doubtless have already gleaned similar lessons from their preliminary flubs.

But Curtis's wide-eyed excitement and the utter sincerity of his approach make it easy to pardon such fumbling. His innocence and candor grant us an opportunity to join a legend in the field of design on his first ride on a new bicycle—and he spares us none of his thrills or spills. While some of the descriptions of his experiments betray a touch of self-indulgence, he manages to balance a “Look, ma, no hands!” attitude with an appropriate amount of self-criticism. And when he does succeed in popping a wheelie, it might not be original, but it's a wheelie all the same.

In spite of the overall weakness of the book's instructional aspect, each chapter manages to impart a bit of wisdom, especially when read alongside the videos posted on hillmancurtis.com. With one exception, all of the projects discussed in the book can be found on the site. The author's later DV work supplements our understanding of his development as a filmmaker, and his meditations on commercial and fine art are greatly informed by his interviews with designers Paula Scher, Stefan



A dancer whom Curtis filmed for his study of movement, on www.hillmancurtis.com

Sagmeister, and Milton Glaser. (His interview with James Victore is the weakest of the series—a fact Curtis himself calls to our attention in the book.) Also on the site is the second installment of his “Films on Films” series. After reading about and watching the first short in the series, “La

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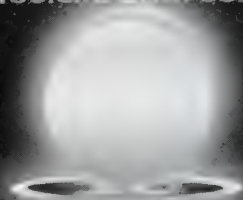
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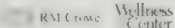
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Curtis' first experiment in nonlinear storytelling: a 30-second advertisement for his book was posted on www.newriders.com

Dolce Vita," which is pretentious but inoffensive (even if it does go for the jugular of the soi-disant cineaste), it's refreshing to see Curtis loosen up by making a more effective confessional piece whose comic backbone is *This Is Spinal Tap* (1984).

Perhaps the most valuable practical lesson Curtis teaches is "Don't try to trick your audience." More an ethos than a set of techniques, his demand for directness and artistic honesty pervades this book. Aware that it is all too easy to overuse DV effects to distract from a project's emptiness, Curtis vilifies his own attempt to use such gimmicks to repair the music video he was commissioned to shoot for the band Superdrag. Damning the entire project as a failure to understand the underlying story, he details the dire consequences of following "the buzz" instead of his heart. There is no shortage here of mantras meant to help filmmakers establish a link between commercial projects and their own artistic goals, fostering respect for clients, themselves, and their shared endeavors.

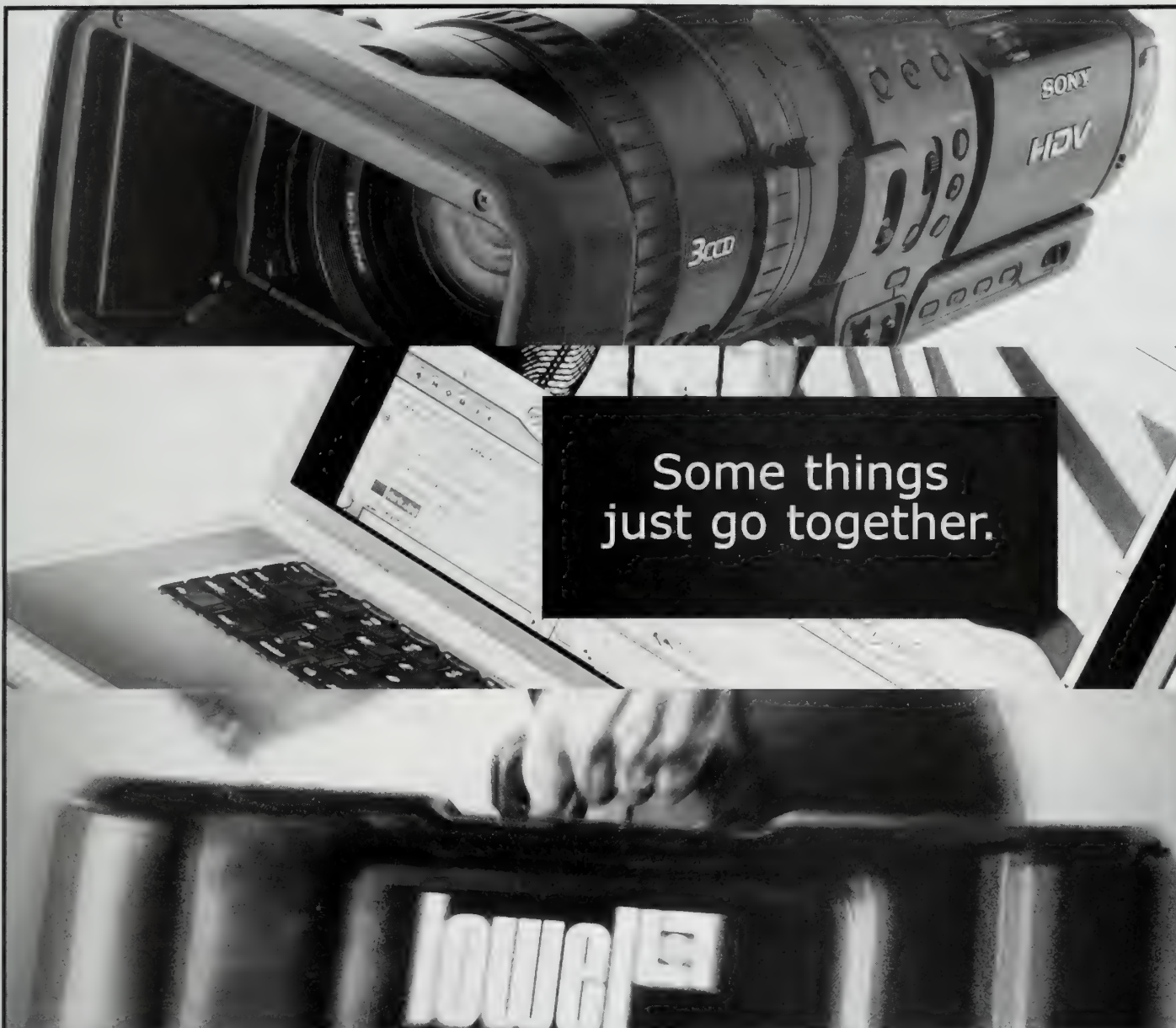
The outstanding strength of the book, and the reason to plunk down \$34.99 to buy it, is its autobiographical element. From the first, Curtis creates a dramatic personal setting for the stories he will tell, painting a portrait of himself in his intro-

duction as a shipwrecked man with only his DVX100 as a life buoy. Indeed, once we get past the initial smokescreen of "Getting Started," he abandons the pretense of writing a tech guide and tears into the meat of why his foray into digital filmmaking was essential to him. Given Curtis's legendary status in the field of graphic design, it should come as no surprise that his meditations on reconciling commercial and fine art are the most engaging part of the book. Reading how Curtis has used new media as a way of reconnecting with life through art will inter-

est anyone seeking to take advantage of the low cost of DV production and to join this revolution in storytelling, whether the project be muse-inspired or market-driven.

Throughout the book, Curtis also persistently and convincingly argues that Flash is the platform to use for web-based video. This is no mere advertisement or statement of personal preference. His observations are clear and correct, and he leaves no doubt that Flash is the future of Web-based video. Furthermore, he makes a strong case for DV as an art form unto itself, an argument that (thankfully) has begun to seem obvious—but Curtis's weighing in on the matter is more than helpful.

The flaws of *Hillman Curtis on Creating Short Films for the Web* are ultimately vindicated by what its author calls his "Do-It-Yourself Philosophy": Only by trying and failing can an artist learn his craft. What we have here, then, is not a primer, per se, but Hillman Curtis's diary of wandering in the wilds of a new medium in search of effective techniques and a new aesthetic. The beginner who buys the book expecting technical assistance will be left to the wolves. But DV filmmakers of all levels of competency may find inspiration in the fruits of experience Curtis harvests here. ★



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Pay Per View or Mobile Phone: Where will your film end up?

By Fernando Ramirez, Esq.

Every time a new type of technology is developed in the entertainment industry, including in motion pictures, issues arise regarding whether use of that new technology was intended in the original agreement or license.

When does an agreement or a license granting a company rights to a copyrighted work, include uses not yet discovered? The matter goes as far back as silent pictures when the question was whether the license to use copyrighted material in a silent movie also included the right to use the same material in the new medium of "talkies." The potential for problems continues to exist for producers today who acquire rights to pre-existing material or who grant their film rights to a distributor. If the terms are not clearly stipulated, the question then is who reaps the entire windfall associated with the new medium—whatever that new medium may be.

Over the years, the courts have continually examined new technology issues. Most of the recent cases involve videocassette rights. Disney, Paramount, MGM,

CBS, Lucasfilm, the actor Mickey Rooney, the films *Casablanca* (1942) and *American Graffiti* (1973), and even the children's book character Curious George (which by the way is, or was at some point, licensed by Universal Pictures and Imagine Entertainment), have all been involved in litigation regarding whether a particular grant of rights included future technologies.

Excluding a clear, new or future technologies clause, which covers the DVD market in a licensing agreement for a film or television program, would mean being cut out of a market that grosses \$24 billion a year. And that's just in the United States. These figures are not limited to major studios either (*Shrek 2*, which in its first three days on shelves sold 12.1 million DVD and video units combined, 11 million of which were DVDs), but also include the independent world with documentaries such as *Super Size Me* (2004) selling over one million DVD units, and narrative films like *Napoleon Dynamite* (2004) making over 63 million dollars in DVDs alone, a figure that surpasses its box office receipts.

DVD is hardly a new technology. It does, however, clearly mark the quickness with which technology emerges and how lucrative well-developed technologies can be in the entertainment business. While just about every area of entertainment—including television viewership, movie-going, and even CD sales—was declining, the DVD industry was growing quickly, handily replacing VHS. As recent as 2003, revenues from home entertainment (the video market) were significantly higher than from theatrical box-office returns. By mid-2003, DVD rentals surpassed VHS, pushing studios to stop creating VHS formats and forcing major retail stores to stop selling or to cutback on VHS.

Distribution or licensing agreements that acquire a complete or full range of rights to a film or program will stipulate every form of media imaginable (by way of a very, very long list that only lawyers can get away with writing) and should, after that, venture to include media that doesn't exist at the time of the agreement. May sound like overkill, but the issue of "new or future technologies" in the film and television industries is a matter that is consistent-

ly litigated by major studios and networks because of the revenue earning potential of exploiting copyrighted material.

I won't spend too much time discussing copyright, other than to say that although the subject can be a bit arcane (and rather dry for that matter), for us law geeks it is a thing of beauty, particularly when it involves film industry agreements such as distribution and licensing. For now, let's remember that copyright grants you (the owner of the film) five exclusive rights—the right to reproduce, adapt, distribute, perform, and display the film. Meaning you can permit or prevent others from exercising those rights. Transfer of rights or licensing, are normally made by contract.

How far do the rights granted in an acquisition agreement or copyright license permit a film company to go? If there is an agreement or license granting all rights in a work (a script, film, program), then there is no issue. Under those terms, the copyright owner (the screenwriter or producer) has conveyed that everything he or she retains has no present or future use (nothing). Problems come up when, for example, the owner splits the rights, in other words, enters into more than one agreement or licensing arrangement without clearly specifying the media covered and the media retained, particularly future technologies.

Film distributors usually want a full range of rights (especially if there's a hefty advance or licensing fee), in part because the more rights the distributor secures, the more opportunities he or she has to potentially recoup and profit from exploitation of those rights for the specified years contracted. In addition to commonly known rights such as television and cable, we have the now almost antiquated VHS, the not so new DVD, the relatively new and not as lucrative markets such as VOD (Video On Demand), micro (or mini) movies for cell phones, and other emerging technologies. For example, a complete and full grant of rights (regardless of medium), stipulating that all present and "future" uses are covered, could stipulate:

"The Rights granted herein by

Production Company to Distributor include any and all media, whether now known or hereafter discovered or devised, including without limitations Theatrical motion picture rights (including all silent, sound dialogue, and musical motion picture rights); Non-Theatrical including without limitation, air-lines and ships serviced from or calling any and all ports, hotels and motels; television including without limitation Pay TV, Pay Per View, Video On Demand, Basic Cable, and Free TV; Internet, digital or online, mobile phones, multimedia and game devices; DVD/Home Video Rights in all forms and formats by any present or future methods or means, whether now or hereafter known or existing [sort of like "discovered or devised"], including without limitation, videograms, videocassettes, laserdiscs, and other audio-visual compact devices of any kind or nature now or hereafter existing; and any and all allied, ancillary and subsidiary rights."

A producer who wants to retain certain rights, including new and unknown uses, would (i) specifically list and limit the rights granted (theatrical, non-theatrical, cable, free television) and (ii) include a "Reservation of Rights" section in the agreement, specifically stipulating what rights the producer is keeping, including a future technology clause. For example,

Reservation of Rights: "Any and all other rights (and any reproductions or derivative works thereof), whether now existing or which may hereafter come into existence, not expressly granted to Company herein, including, but not limited to, video cassettes, video discs, laser discs, digital versatile discs (DVD), or other devices, whether now known or hereafter discovered or devised, print publication, electronic publication in all media and in all formats other than those addressed herein, are reserved for Producer."

A single agreement would cover both a clearly enumerated "Grant of Rights" and, where applicable, a "Reservation of Rights," spelling out what has been granted and what has been reserved, including new or future technologies. With the development and rapid proliferation of new media for exploitation of film, a clear stipulation of what type of rights are granted and/or reserved is more important than ever. ★

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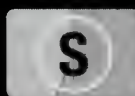
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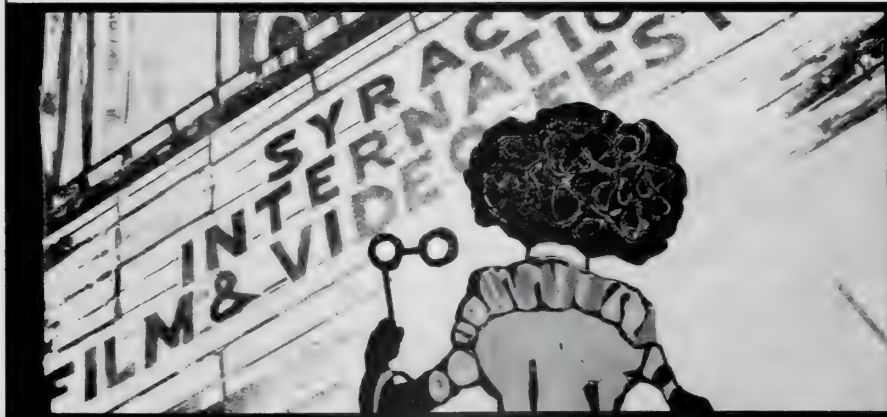
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FESTIVALS

By Katie Ainslie

Listings do not constitute an endorsement. We recommend that you contact the festival directly before sending cast-sets, as details may change after the magazine goes to press. Deadline 1st of the month two months prior to cover date (e.g., Sept. 1st for Nov. issue). Include festival dates, categories, prizes, entry fees, deadlines, formats & contact info. Send to: festivals@aivf.org

DOMESTIC

ABSOLUTE TIME FILM FESTIVAL, March, CA. Deadline: Oct. 31; Nov. 15 (final). Festival focus is (but not limited to) films written, produced and/or directed by under-represented communities. Mission of fest is to present films that explore cross-cultural communication. Films must have been produced in the past 12 months. Cats: feature, short, animation, doc. Awards: \$200 jury award for best film. Formats: 1/2", DVD, Mini-DV. Preview on VHS or DVD. Entry Fee: \$20; \$35 (final). Contact: San Francisco Stage & Film; (415)401-9768; sfstagefilm@yahoo.com; www.sfstagefilm.org.

ANN ARBOR FILM FESTIVAL, Mar. 21-26, MI. Deadline: Sept. 1, Nov. 1, Dec. 1 (final). Fest welcomes all cats & genres of independent filmmaking. Founded: 1963. Cats: any style or genre, feature, doc, short, animation, experimental. Awards: \$18,000 in cash prizes awarded. Formats: 16mm, 35mm, DVD, Beta SP. Preview on VHS, DVD or 16mm. Entry Fee: \$30; \$35; \$40 (final). Contact: Festival; (734) 995-5356; fax: 995-5396; info@aafilmfest.org; www.aafilmfest.org.

ASPEN SHORTSFEST, April 5-9, CO. Deadline: Nov. 4, Dec. 14 (final). Fest is a premiere int'l competitive showcase for short films (30 mins & less). Fest seeks entries of originality, integrity & technical excellence. Student & int'l entries also

welcome. Founded: 1992. Cats: short, animation, children, doc, student. Awards: cash prizes total \$23,000. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, Beta SP, 70mm. Preview on VHS or DVD. Entry Fee: \$35, \$45, \$55 (final). Contact: Ryan Van Bidder; (970) 925-6882; fax: 925-1967; shorts fest@aspenfilm.org; www.aspenfilm.org.

BARE BONES INT'L INDEPENDENT FILM FESTIVAL, April 17-13, OK. Deadline: Nov. 1; Dec. 31; Jan. 26 (final). Projects budgeted for less than a million dollars are eligible to enter the fest. Seven days of screenings, workshops, screenplay readings, location tour, youth film projects. Cats: feature, doc, short, animation, experimental, script, music video, student, youth media. Awards: Auteur of the Year; Audience Choice Award; Grand Jury Awards. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, Most Video formats. Entry Fee: \$20-\$50. Contact: Shiron Butterfly Ray; (918) 616-1335; barebonesfilmfestival@yahoo.com; www.barebonesfilmfestival.com.

BERLIN & BEYOND, Jan. 12-18, CA. Deadline: Oct. 1. This fest's goal is "to present rarely seen independent films that are not shown at film fests around the Bay Area & to contribute an important aspect of European filmmaking to the Bay Area's diverse film fest scene." Cats: feature, doc, short. Awards: Best First Feature; Audience Award. Formats: 35mm, 16mm. Preview on DVD or VHS. Entry Fee: None - also, no entry form. Contact: Ingrid

Eggers, Goethe-Institut; (415)263-8768; fax: 391-8715; program@goethe-sf.org; www.goethe.de/uk/saf/bballgemein/bbfilmmaker.htm.

BLACK MARIA FILM FESTIVAL, January-June, NJ. Deadline: Nov. 20. The Black Maria seeks to "identify, exhibit & reward compelling new independent media, reach audiences in a wide variety of settings nationwide, & advocate exceptional achievement that expands the expressive terrain of film & video." Founded: 1980. Cats: any style or genre. Awards: Jurors' Choice Works (share \$2,500); Jurors' Citation Works (share \$2,000); Directors Choice Works (share \$1,000); plus winners share \$5,000+ in exhibition honoraria. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, 1/2", super 8, DVD. Preview on VHS. Entry Fee: \$35 (shorts, 30 min. or less); \$45 (features, 30-70 min.). Contact: John Columbus, Fest Dir.; (201) 200-2043; fax: 200-3490; blackmariafest@aol.com; www.blackmariafilmfestival.com.

BROOKLYN INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL, June 2-11, NY. Deadline: Nov. 30; March 15 (Final). In the effort of consolidating its international presence, BIFF has been developing solid ties with major overseas film fests and distribution companies as well as successfully pursuing international sponsorship. Founded: 1997. Cats: feature, doc, experimental, short, animation. Awards: \$65,000 in services and cash. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, Beta SP, DV,

DVD, CD-ROM, DigiBeta, HD cam. Preview on DVD or VHS (non-returnable). Entry Fee: \$30; \$50 (final). Contact: Marco Ursino, 180 South 4th St., Ste. 2 S., Brooklyn, NY 11211; (718) 388-4306; fax: 599-5039; 2006@wbff.org; www.wbff.org.

CHICAGO LATINO FILM FESTIVAL, April 21-May 3, IL. Deadline: Nov 30. Festival promotes Latino culture in the U.S. by presenting the best & most recent films & videos from Spain, Portugal, Latin America & the United States. Works from Latin America, Spain, Portugal & the United States are considered as well as works from other countries if the director is of Iberoamerican descent, or the subject matter is directly related to Latino culture. Preference is given to premieres, although works of strong historical or artistic value are often showcased. The Festival presents all forms of filmmaking incl. narrative, animation, documentaries, experimental, etc. The Fest encourages the submission of works for young audiences to be presented during matinees for students. Founded: 1987. Cats: Feature, Short, children, family, student, youth media, doc, animation, experimental. Awards: Audience Award. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, Beta SP, DVD. Preview on VHS. Entry Fee: \$25. Contact: Int'l Latino Cultural Center of Chicago; (312) 431-1330; fax: 344-8030; info@latinoculturalcenter.org; www.latinoculturalcenter.org.

CLEVELAND INT'L FILM FESTIVAL, March 16-26, OH. Deadline: Aug. 31; Sept. 30; Oct. 31 (final). Founded in 1977, the Cleveland Film Society has presented the Cleveland Int'l Film Festival every spring for nearly three decades. Ohio's premier film event features more than 200 new films from over 40 countries on six continents. Visiting directors, panel discussions, student screenings & a conference for area filmmakers are all CIFF highlights. Founded: 1977. Cats: narrative, experimental, animation, doc, feature, short, student. Awards: \$500 cash prize is awarded to most winners. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, Beta SP, DigiBeta. Preview on VHS or DVD. Entry Fee: \$30-\$85. Contact: William Guentzler, Director of Programming; (216) 623-3456, ext. 11; fax: (216) 623-0103; cfs@clevelandfilm.org; www.clevelandfilm.org.

GEORGE LINDSEY UNA FILM FESTIVAL, March 3-5, AL. Deadline: Sept. 15; Nov. 15; Dec. 1 (final). Fest sponsored by actor George Lindsey & his alma mater, the University of North Alabama. Screenings of accepted films & free workshops conducted by industry professionals during the event. Works completed in the previous three years are eligible. Cats: feature, short, music video, student, doc, animation. Awards: \$1,000 cash prize for both Best of Show & Sweet Home Alabama Awards, along w/ prizes awarded in each category. Preview on VHS. Entry Fee: \$10-35 (Student); \$20-35. Contact: Festival; (256) 765-4592; lindseyfilmfest@una.edu; www.lindseyfilmfest.com.

EAST LANSING CHILDRENS FILM FESTIVAL, Feb. 24-March 2, MI. Deadline: Nov. 14. This Festival is dedicated to showcasing films from around the globe that enrich, inspire & entertain children w/out violent or exploitative subject matter. Cats: children. Preview on VHS or DVD. Entry Fee: None. Contact: ELCFF; (517) 853-0502; info@elcff.com; www.elcff.com.

FLORIDA FILM FESTIVAL, March 24-April 2, FL. Deadline: Nov. 18 (Shorts); Dec. 3 (Features). Festival boasts many industry celebrities participating & contributing to the fest, along w/ a wide range of American & Int'l filmmakers. Many other events incl. parties & educational forums are included in the fests ten day line-up. 51 percent of all funding must come from US sources. Founded: 1990. Cats: feature, doc, short. Awards: Grand Jury Prize, Audience Award Prize. Formats: 35mm, DigiBeta, Beta SP, DVD. VHS or DVD. Entry Fee: \$40 (features); \$25 (shorts). Contact: Festival; (407) 644-5625; www.filmfest@enzian.org; www.floridafilmmfestival.com.

FLORIDA FILM FESTIVAL, March 24-April 2, FL. Deadline: Nov. 18 (Shorts); Dec. 3 (Features). Festival boasts many industry celebrities participating & contributing to the fest, along w/ a wide range of American & Int'l filmmakers. Many other events incl. parties & educational forums are included in the fests ten day line-up. 51 percent of all funding must come from US sources. Founded: 1990. Cats: fea-

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ture, doc, short. Awards: Grand Jury Prize, Audience Award Prize. Formats: 35mm, DigiBeta, Beta SP, DVD, VHS or DVD. Entry Fee: \$40 (features); \$25 (shorts). Contact: Festival; (407) 644-5625; filmfest@enzian.org; www.floridafilmmfestival.com.

FULL FRAME DOC FILM FESTIVAL, April 6-9, NC. Deadline: Oct. 15, Nov. 15, Dec. 15 (final). The four day event takes place at the historic Carolina Theatre in downtown Durham, North Carolina, w/ morning to midnight screenings, panel discussions, seminars, Q&A sessions. Works must have been completed after Jan. of previous year. Films cannot be longer than 180 min.. Cats: doc. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, Beta SP, DigiBeta. preview on VHS/DVD. Entry Fee: \$35; \$45; \$55 (final). Contact: Phoebe Brush; (919) 687-4100; fax: 687-4200; phoebe@fullframefest.org; www.fullframefest.org.

NASHVILLE INDEPENDENT FILM FESTIVAL, April 20-26, TN. Deadline: Sept. 9; Nov. 4; Dec. 2. Formerly the Sinking Creek Film & Video Festival, fest is the longest-running film fest in the South w/ an int'l reputation for its support & encouragement of independent media. Festival programs over 150 films & provides high-end industry level workshops. Fest incl. workshops, panels, screenings, parties & closing awards ceremony. Founded: 1969. Cats: animation, doc, feature, student, experimental, short, youth media, children, music video, family. Awards: Cash prizes awarded for all cats plus a special award, The Regal Cinema/Nashville Independent Film Festival Dreammaker Award, which grants the award-winning film a week's run in a Regal Cinema in Los Angeles county, also qualifies the winner for Academy Award consideration. 1st prize in the short narrative, student short, animation cats also qualifies winner for Academy Award consideration.. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, Beta, DigiBeta, DVD. Preview on VHS or DVD. Entry Fee: \$35/\$40/\$45 (under 60 min.); \$50/\$55/\$60 (over 60 min.). Contact: Brian Gordon; (615) 742-2500; fax: 742-1004; info@nashvillefilmfestival.org; www.nashvillefilmfestival.org.

NEW YORK UNDERGROUND FILM FESTIVAL, March 10-16, NY. Deadline: Nov. 15; Dec. 1 (final). NYC's premiere showcase for films that go beyond mainstream expectations & commercial concerns. VARIETY calls the fest "the outer fringes of independent cinema." Fest seeks "innovation, experimentation, documentation, animation, revelation & reverberation" & "movies that go beyond all expectations, incl. ours". Founded: 1994. Cats: narrative feature, narrative short, doc, experimental, animation, , short, feature. Awards: Juried prizes for Best Feature, Best Short, Best doc, Best Animation, Best Experimental, plus the Festival Choice award. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, 1/2", super 8, Beta, mini-DV. Preview on VHS/DVD. Entry Fee: \$30; \$35. Contact: Kendra Gaeta; (212) 614-2775; fax: 614-2776; info@nyuff.com; www.nyuff.com.

NEWPORT BEACH INT'L FILM FESTIVAL, April 20-30, CA. Deadline: Nov. 15; Jan. 15; Jan. 30 (final). Approximately 75 feature length & 25 short films chosen to compete for one of 10 awards. If preferred, films may be excluded from competition &/or exhibited in the "special screening" section of the program. All films must have optical (not magnetic) sound. Films must be in English or w/ English subtitles. Formats: 70mm, 35mm, 16mm. Preview on VHS. Entry Fee: \$50 (feature); \$40 (short). Contact: Joseph Mahoney; 949-253-2880; fax: 949-253-2881; info@newportbeachfilmfest.com; www.newportbeachfilmfest.com.

RIVER RUN FILM FESTIVAL, March 16-19, NC. Deadline: Aug 2; Oct 3; Nov 28; Dec 15. The RiverRun Int'l Film Festival is one of the premier film fests in the Southeastern United States. Located in Winston-Salem, North Carolina, home of the nation's first arts council, the fest showcases a rich blend of works by independent, int'l & student filmmakers. The fest was created as a forum to encourage filmmakers & provide them w/ suitable venues for their work. RiverRun features a number of fest screenings & premieres, as well as workshops & seminars offering opportunities "to delve deeper into the crafts of filmmaking". Cats: animation, feature, doc, short. Awards: Juried & audi-

ence awards. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, 1/2", Beta, DigiBeta. On VHS or DVD. Entry Fee: Shorts: \$20-\$40 Feature: \$30-\$45. Contact: Julie Freeman, Director of Operations/Programming; (336)724-1502; fax: 724-1112; festival@riverrunfilm.com; www.riverrunfilm.com.

ROCHESTER INT'L FILM FESTIVAL, May 4-6, NY. Deadline: Dec. 1; Feb. 14 (final). Annual fest is the longest-running film event dedicated to the art of short film & video (30 min max). Award winners screened at George Eastman House, Int'l Museum of Photography & Film. Founded: 1959. Cats: any style or genre, short, No music videos or installations. Formats: 16mm, 1/2", 35mm, DigiBeta, Beta SP. Preview on VHS or DVD. Entry Fee: \$30; \$40 (final). Contact: Movies on a Shoestring, Inc; (716) 234-7411; President@RochesterFilmFest.org; www.RochesterFilmFest.org.

SAN DIEGO LATINO FILM FESTIVAL, March 9-19, CA. Deadline: Nov. 30. The longest running annual Latino/Chicano film & video fest in S. CA. Award-winning films/videos from throughout the US, Mexico, Latin America have been screened. Fest will incl. screenings throughout San Diego & Tijuana community, discussions w/ filmmakers & catalog of all work screened. SDLFF has used the unique geographical & cultural position of the San Diego Border Region to make the fest a premiere venue for the exhibition of int'l & U.S. Latino features, shorts & documentaries. Looking for works by Latinos &/or about the Latino experience. Cats: feature, doc, short, experimental, student, youth media. Awards: Best in each category award; Audience Award. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, Beta SP, Mini-DV, S-VHS, 1/2", Beta, DigiBeta, Super 8, 70mm, 3/4", DVD. Preview on VHS or DVD. Entry Fee: \$15 (shorts); \$25 (Features). Contact: Ethan van Thillo, c/o Media Arts Center San Diego; (619) 230-1938; fax: 230-1937; sdloff@mediaartscenter.org; www.sdlatinofilm.com.

SAN FRANCISCO INT'L FILM FESTIVAL, April 20-May 4, CA. Deadline: Nov. 11; Dec. 9. Founded in 1957 & the oldest film fest in america, SFIFF is presented each spring

by the San Francisco Film Society showcasing approx. 200 features, docs & shorts; fest is dedicated to highlighting current trends in int'l film & video, w/an emphasis on work w/out US distrib. Fest has two sections: the invitational, non-competitive section for recent features, archival presentations, retros & special awards & tributes recognizing individual achievement; & the competitive section for doc, shorts, animation, experimental & TV. Founded: 1957. Cats: feature, doc, short, animation, experimental, music video, student, youth media, TV, any style or genre. Awards: incl. Golden Gate Awards (14 awards & cash prizes totaling \$21,500); features also eligible for the FIPRESCI prize; Audience Awards. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, 3/4", Beta SP, 70mm. Preview on VHS or DVD. Entry Fee: \$15-200 (depending on category of film or video). Contact: Programming Dept.; (415) 561-5022; fax: 561-5099; programming@sffs.org; www.sffs.org.

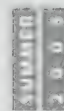
SANTA BARBARA INT'L FILM FESTIVAL, Feb. 3-12, CA. Deadline: Aug. 12; Sept. 30; Nov. 4; Nov. 18 (final). Fest is "dedicated to enriching local culture & raising consciousness of film as an art form". It presents American Independent, Spanish & Latin American, European, World & Doc cinema. In addition to film exhibition & celebrity tributes, fest has produced panel discussions, covering aspects of filmmaking, from the craft to the business plus education through the 10-10-10 Film Competition & Kids Fest. Founded: 1986. Cats: feature, doc, short, student, animation. Awards: Jury Awards & Cash Prizes. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, DigiBeta, Beta SP, DVD, HD. Preview on VHS or DVD. Entry Fee: \$30/\$35 (Early: shorts/features); \$55/\$60 (Final: shorts/features); check website for other fees. Contact: Programming; (805) 963-0023; fax: 962-2524; info@sbfilmfestival.org; www.sbfilmfestival.org.

TRIBECA FILM FESTIVAL, April 25- May 7, NY. Deadline: Nov. 4; Dec. 9 (final, shorts); Dec. 16 (final, features). Created by Jane Rosenthal & Robert De Niro, the mission of the fest is to "enable the int'l film community & the general public to experience the power of film by redefining the film

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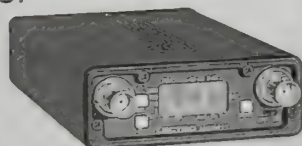
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fest experience". Fest was founded to celebrate NYC as a major filmmaking center & to contribute to the long-term recovery of lower Manhattan. Cats: feature, doc, short, animation, experimental, student. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, HD Cam. Preview on VHS, DVD. Contact: Festival; (212) 941-2304; entries@tribecafilmfestival.org; www.tribecafilmfestival.org.

TRUE / FALSE FILM FESTIVAL, Feb. 24-26; April 21-23, MO. Deadline: Sept. 30; Oct. 30; Nov. 30 (final). The fest welcomes documentaries & work that crosses boundaries between fact & fiction. Festival pays for all travel expenses of invited filmmakers. Cats: doc. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, DV cam, DV, mini-DV. Preview on VHS or DVD. Entry Fee: \$20; \$25; \$30 (final). Contact: Festival; (573)443-TRUE; fax: 443-4884; info@truefalse.org; www.truefalse.org.

U.S. COMEDY ARTS FESTIVAL, Feb. 9-13, CO. Deadline: Nov. 5. Festival is the annual HBO-sponsored event held in Aspen, Colorado that features the best comedic film, theater, standup, & sketch to an industry-heavy audience. Approximately 25 features & 25 shorts are selected from over 800 submissions. Shorts must be under 60 min.. Cats: Feature, short. Formats: 35mm, Video. Preview on VHS or DVD. Entry Fee: None. Contact: Attn: Film Program; (310) 382-3595; fax: 382-3445; kevin.haasarud@hbo.com; www.hbocomedyfestival.com.

VC FILMFEST: LOS ANGELES ASIAN PACIFIC FILM FESTIVAL, Visual Communications Los Angeles Asian Pacific Film & Video Festival, May 4-11, CA. Deadline: Nov. 14; Dec. 16 (final). Visual Communications, the nation's premier Asian Pacific American media arts center, established Fest as a vehicle to promote Asian & Asian Pacific American cinema. The Fest has grown from its beginnings as a week-end series into an annual showcase presenting the best of Asian Pacific American & Asian int'l media in the United States. VC Filmfest will incl. the latest new works by established & emerging filmmakers & video artists; feature length productions showcasing the talents of Asian American acting & producing talents; new work by

Asian int'l artists; & filmmaking seminars, panel discussions & symposiums on topics relevant to Asian American Cinema. Founded: 1983. Cats: feature, doc, short, animation/graphic films, experimental, 1-Channel Videoworks (all genres). Awards: Golden Reel & Linda Mabalot New Directors/New Visions Awards; Audience Awards for best feature & documentary. Formats: 16mm, 35mm, 8mm, Beta SP. Preview on VHS. Entry Fee: \$20; \$35 (final). Contact: Festival Director; (213)680-4462; fax: 687-4848; info@vconline.org; www.vconline.org.

WORLDVEST HOUSTON INT'L FILM & VIDEO FESTIVAL, April 22-May 1, TX. Deadline: Nov. 15; Dec. 15; Jan. 15 (final). WorldFest has reduced the number of films screened to a maximum of 60 feature & 100 short premieres, w/ a total & absolute emphasis on American & Int'l Independent feature films. Fest honors films from Mexico, Canada, France & Germany. Associated market for features, shorts, documetaries, video, independent/experimental & TV. Fest also offers 3-day seminars on writing, producing & directing, plus distribution & finance. Founded: 1961. Cats: feature, doc, short, script, experimental, animation, music video, student, youth media, TV, children, family. Awards: Student Awards Program. Scripts & screenplays also have competition. Cash, services & equipment awards. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, 3/4", 1/2", Beta SP, S-VHS, DigiBeta, U-matic, DVD, CD-ROM, Web. Preview on VHS. Entry Fee: \$40-\$90. Contact: Team Worldfest, Entry Director; (713) 965-9955; fax: (713) 965-9960; mail@worldfest.org; www.worldfest.org.

INTERNATIONAL

ANIMA (BRUSSELS INT'L FESTIVAL OF CARTOONS & ANIMATED FILMS), Feb. 24-March 5, Belgium. Deadline: Nov. 1. Since 1982, fest has been showcase for new, interesting works in animation, providing opp. to be seen by Belgian film & TV distribs. While noncompetitive, it is one of top 8 European animation fests involved in nominating films that compete for Cartoon d'Or. Close to 34,000 spectators attend hundreds of film premieres, retros &

programs & short ind. animation are some fest highlights. Founded: 1982. Cats: animation, short, children, feature, experimental, music video, student. Awards: Belgian competition for best short animated film. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, Beta SP, 70mm, DVD. Preview on DVD, VHS or Beta SP. Entry Fee: None. Contact: Francoise Catahala; 011 322 534 4125; fax: 322 534 2279; info@folioscope.be; www.avn.com/folioscope.

CINEMA DU REEL, March 10-19, France. Deadline: Nov. 30; Dec. 31. Int'l fest of visual anthropology & social documentation, was set up in 1979 w/ aim of promoting documentary cinema. Fest is held at the George Pompidou Centre in Paris & followed by Overview of Ethnographic Films, held at the Musée de l'Homme. Films & videos not released theatrically in France or aired on French TV, & unawarded at other French int'l fests are eligible. Works w/ cinematographic qualities & emphasizing filmmaker's point of view likely for selection; info docs or news reports not considered. Films must have been completed after Jan. of previous year. Cats: docs only. Awards: Awards, decided by int'l jury, incl Grand Prix (8,000 euro, approx \$8,000), short film prize (2,500 euro), Joris Ivens Prize to young filmmaker (2,500 euro) & Multimedia Author's Society (SCAM) Prize (4,580 euro). Jury of librarians & professionals award the Libraries Prize (6,000 euro for films w/ French version or French subtitles) w/in int'l competitive section or French Panorama & Foreign Affairs Ministry awards, Louis Marcorelles Prize. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, Beta. Preview on VHS. Entry Fee: None. Contact: Suzette Glenadel, Director; 011 33 1 44 78 44 21; fax: 78 12 24; cinereel@bpi.fr; www.bpi.fr.

GÖTEBORG FILM FESTIVAL, Jan. 27-Feb. 6, Sweden. Deadline: November 15. Göteborg Film Festival is the biggest public film fest in Scandinavia. Each year, some 400 films are screened for 110,000 visitors. Additionally, some 60 film related seminars attract roughly 5,000 visitors. The fest is run as a non-profit organization w/ support from, among others, the city of Göteborg, the Swedish Film Institute,

Västra Götalandsregionen, the Nordic Film & TV Fund & Scandinavian Films. Fest's aim is to give the audience an opportunity to see films reflecting the current state of world cinema outside conventional distribution forms & to widen cinema repertoire. Founded: 1979. Cats: Feature, Short, doc, animation. Formats: 8mm, 16mm, 35mm, Beta SP (PAL), DigiBeta, Beta SP. Preview on VHS. Entry Fee: \$25 Euros. Contact: Jannike Ahlund, Festival Director; +46 31 339 3000; fax: 011 46 31 41 00 63; info@filmfestival.org; www.goteborg.filmfestival.org.


INT'L FILM FESTIVAL DORTMUND, April 12-17, Germany. Deadline: Nov. 30. Founded: 1987. Cats: Any style or genre, feature, doc, short. Awards: non-competitive. Formats: All formats accepted, 35mm, 16mm, S-VHS, Beta, Beta SP, DigiBeta, U-matic. Preview on VHS. Entry Fee: None. Contact: femme totale e.V., c/o Kulturburo Stadt Dortmund; 011 49 231 50 25 162; fax: 011 49 231 50 25 734; info@femmetotale.de; www.femmetotale.de.

MAX OPHULS FILM FESTIVAL, Jan. 23-29, Germany. Deadline: Nov. 1. Estab in 1980, compet fest is particularly for young dirs from German speaking countries (Switzerland, Austria, Luxembourg & Germany) who may enter up 3 films. Features accepted for competition; fest also accepts shorts, docs, & exp works. Formats: 16mm, 35mm. Preview on VHS. Entry Fee: US \$ none. Contact: Christel Drawer, director; 0681 90689 0; fax: 0681 90689 20; info@max-ophuels-preis.de; www.max-ophuels-preis.de

ONE WORLD INT'L HUMAN RIGHTS FILM FESTIVAL, March 2-9, Czech Republic. Deadline: Nov. 30. Festival features documentaries that "explore, question, & challenge the complexities of the times in which we live in." Cats: doc. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, Video, DVD, Beta SP, DV-Cam. Entry Fee: None. Contact: One World Festival/ People in Need Foundation; 42 0 226 200 439; program@oneworld.cz; www.oneworld.cz.

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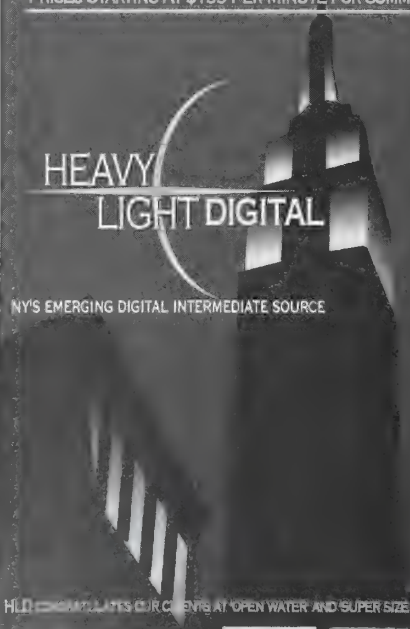
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tive structure in all stages of the film-making process, including story development, fundraising trailers and post-production. She has doctored over 30 films and is the author of "Trailer Mechanics." For private consultations and workshops visit www.documentarydoctor.com or write to info@documentarydoctor.com.

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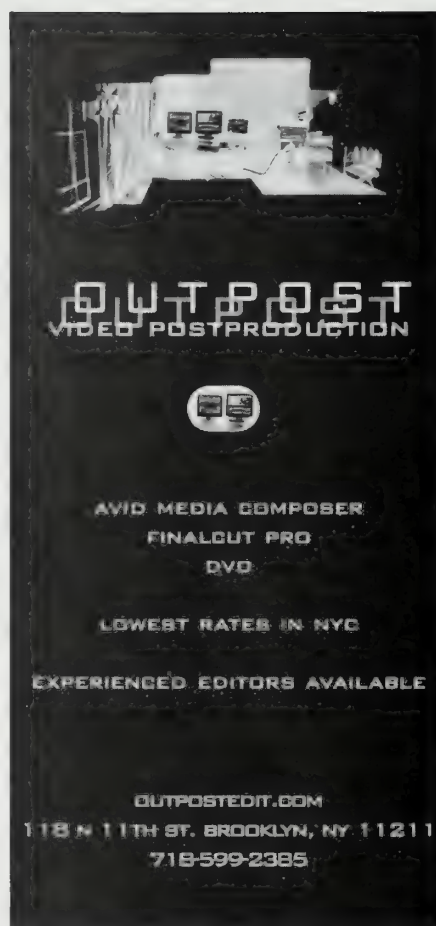
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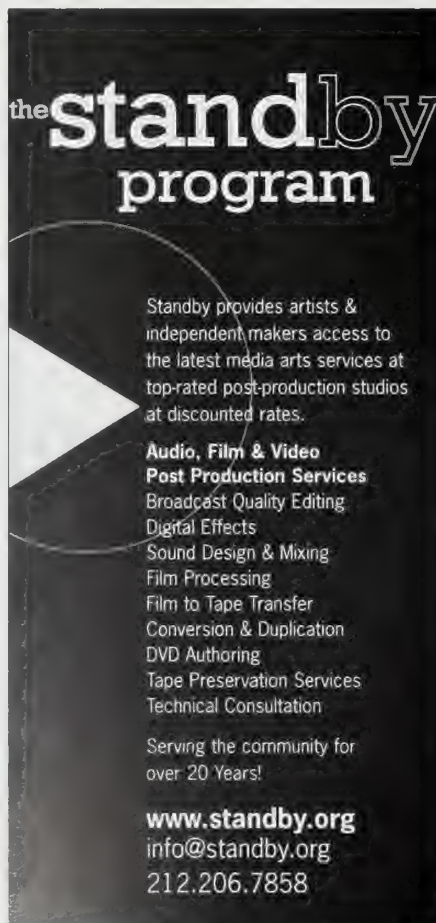
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By Erica Berenstein

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RESOURCES / FUNDS

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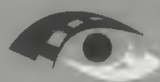
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THE DOCUMENTARY CHANNEL is a new digital cable channel dedicated to airing, exclusively, the works of the independent documentary filmmaker. There isn't a single type of documentary that they will not show, and they are not afraid of controversy. That said, they prefer the edgier, more personal films that tell a story and that show something in a unique, visual manner. See the website for submission

instructions. Submissions accepted on a rolling basis. Please visit <http://documentarychannel.com/index.htm> for more information or email programs@documentarychannel.com.

WIRESTREAM FILMSEARCH seeks films for broadcast. WireStream Productions, in Cooperation with WireStream networks, is seeking independent films and television series for broadcast. Genre welcome include Drama, Comedy, SciFi, Fantasy, Nonfiction/Reality and Educational films and series, suitable for general/mature audiences. All entries must be available for all rights worldwide. Entries previously presented are eligible subject to confirmation of rights. Submit entries to Wayne Hicks, Executive Producer, via email to wayne@wirestreamproductions.com, or by Parcel Post to WireStream Productions, 3005B W.Hwy 76, Branson MO 65616.

WEBCAST

FILMFIGHTS.COM democratic filmfestival that anyone can enter, 3 times a month. We filmfight every ten days of the month (the 10th, 20th, and 30th) and submissions are due 1 day before the fight—given a title or genre, the submissions are voted on

through the website. The winner is the winner and goes into the archives, and their video sits front and center until the next winner is crowned, along with a little blurb about whatever they feel like. Please visit the website for a complete list of guidelines: <http://filmfights.com/submit.shtml>.

KNOWITALLVIDEO created an online video community aimed at world's largest user-generated video collection. With an exhaustive list of categories covering every conceivable subject, any wannabe star or director with a camera can easily upload short-form digital videos for an unlimited audience of Internet and wireless PDA users who search the site by key word or category, all completely free of charge—equal parts talent showcase and information resource. For more information please visit www.knowitallvideo.com.

WWW.VIDEOART.NET is looking for new filmmakers, video artists, producers, etc. to post their clips into a searchable database. Registration is free. We're also interested in learning about your work, new links, trends, equipment, and general film dialogue in the forums. A great opportunity to showcase your talents and discuss your work in the forums.

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By Erica Berenstein

COMEDY EXPRESS TV seeks funny films under 7 min. to show and promote on television. We will show, onscreen, the credits and contact information for the filmmakers, including your 15,000! Please look at our website www.comedyexpress.tv which gives more background as well as the online release which MUST accompany all submissions. Contact: Adam Gilad 9229 Sunset Blvd LA CA 90069 adamgilad@mac.com 310 271 0023.

FILM IN THE CITY seeks documentary film submissions for "Dinner and Docs," an ongoing series that showcases new docs each month. Film Docs must be between 1-1/2 hour long. (no longer), email your brief one paragraph bio to Staff@Eventsinthecity.org, with 'DINNER AND DOCS' in the subject line (NO ATTACHMENTS), email the length of your film, include contact info.

FIRST SUNDAYS COMEDY FILM FESTIVAL Deadline: ongoing. A monthly festival featuring the best in comedy and short film/digi/animation followed by an after-screening networking event. An ongoing festival held the first Sunday of each month at the Pioneer Theater in New York, First Sundays is the premiere opportunity to showcase work and meet talented directors and other indie dv/film folk. Cats: short (under 20 min.), comedy, animation/dv/film.

Formats: Mini-DV, DVD, VHS. Entry Fee: \$20. Contact: (email) film@chicagocitylimits.com or www.firstsundays.com.

MACHINE DREAMS is developing a series of theatrical shows for national audiences that will involve original music, movies, movie shorts, animations, games, graphics and art. We are conducting a global search for the best ORIGINAL independent material in the following categories: Social Commentary & Societal Issues, Humor and Satire, Special Effects, Interactive "No Death" Gaming, Great Media in any form (music, music video, movie, movie shorts, animation, games, graphics, art) We plan to incorporate your work in one or more of the following ways: 1. Include it in a juried show in New York City, with winners receiving recognition and cash prizes and airing on a network television show, 2. Include it in one or more interactive shows in New York City, 3. Include it in distribution across movie theatres, DVD, web, television, cable, satellite or radio broadcast. Email a BRIEF DESCRIPTION to us of your work: kate@machine-dreams.com DO NOT SEND US YOUR WORK YET. For more information call Kate Lawson at 612-371-4428 x11.

NEW SCREEN is not just a TV show, but rather, an entire Television Channel, dedicated to exhibiting independent film and fine art video. In addition to television exposure, "New Vision Awards," totaling \$17,500 in cash, will be awarded this year for the following categories: Overall Best Film/Video, Best Animation, Best Documentary, Best Drama, Best Student, and Best Fine Art. New Screen will review works of any length, topic, or year of production. There is no fee to submit. For more info: www.newscreen.tv.

SHORT CUTS is now accepting submissions for their monthly screenings. No submission fee. Short Cuts is dedicated to providing filmmakers with an intimate setting to screen their work and network with others in the film community. Short Cuts encourages submissions from first-time directors, students and professionals living anywhere in the world. Round the year submissions. To submit, please visit our website www.shortcuts.in.

SMOGDANCE, the Seventh Annual Pomona Film Festival, wants to see your cinematic statement. Our Smogdance '04 committee is already up and running. Contact us if you'd like to be a part of the Inland Empire's most exciting and eclectic film event. Submission Deadline: December 15, 2005 Festival Date: January 21, 2005 — January 23, 2005 Smogdance '04 • (909) 629-9797 • FX: (909) 629-8697 • smogdance@hotmail.com.

THE PIONEER THEATER—NYC's showcase of independent cinema. Always on the lookout for new movies to screen. To submit for a public screening, check out: www.twoboots.com/pioneer/submit.htm.

VERSUSMEDIA is seeking entries for their first ever "Film Versus Music" ten minute film short contest starting on June 1st. Just as the name says, we want this film short contest to glorify the usage of music in film! It is our hope that this contest will help spread the benefit of musicians and filmmakers working together with a common goal, exposure. Usage of music in film can come from a wide range of film topics and genres, so we are not requiring a set theme to the film submissions. For further information regarding this contest, please visit www.versusmedia.com/contest.php.

WOMEN IN THE DIRECTOR'S CHAIR FILM/VIDEO FESTIVAL is the largest and longest-running women's film and video festival in the US. Since 1980, the annual Women in the Director's Chair Festival has showcased an incredible array of over 1200 outstanding films, videos and other media by women, girls and transgendered directors from around the world. Each year, the festival draws on over 100 enthusiastic volunteers of varied backgrounds to view, discuss, debate, review, ultimately determine the films and videos that will show that year. The goal of the festival is to create a space in which a plurality of visions, representing very different cultural, political and personal priorities, results in exchange and interaction. Submission deadline: November 15, 2005. (773) 907-0610 • FX: (773) 907-0381 widc@widc.org.

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THE LIST

Tooling Around

By Erica Berenstein

Independent filmmakers have been known to resort to some pretty crazy inventions when they find themselves at a technological loss—a wheelchair as a dolly, for example. We asked some of our favorite filmmakers to tell us about the most creative tool or process they came up with to replace the real thing.

“The director, Keith Beauchamp, and I were preparing a grassroots mailing to local churches in the area and had 10,000 postcards divided amongst 14 heavy boxes that we needed to get to the post office and mail out. The first thing we did was load up my building’s dolly, which we had borrowed and trekked through the summer heat from 58th and First to the US Post Office on 3rd and 53rd. We looked like out-of-place garment center workers. When we arrived, there was not an elevator in sight. So in the middle of rush hour, I asked Keith to take the escalator to the second floor. We proceeded to turn the escalator into our personal assembly line. One by one, I loaded the boxes on the escalator. Keith was at the top, receiving and sorting our materials. Heads turned and passerbys praised us for our resourcefulness.”

—Steven Laitmon, executive producer,
The Untold Story of Emmett Louis Till

“Back in film school we wanted to do a Sam Raimi bullet-POV shot, so I held the camera while somebody pushed me on my roller blades. It would have worked too—if I wasn’t so klutzy!”

—Debra Kirschner, writer/director/producer, *The Tollbooth*

“How to light a scene that happens at night in total darkness when you have no money for generators and no permission to use extension cords in any nearby buildings to plug in lights: Take your car and aim the headlights at the scene, remember to turn the engine off for sound... Then use battery operated “push lites” held just out of frame for fill light on the faces. Or, aim a

flashlight at a flex fill... Color balance under that existing light scheme. That’s how I did it in my first no budget miniDV indie short, *jared*. It was pretty comical now when I think back on it, but it worked, and that little movie went on to win a grand jury prize at a film festival in Madrid... I have since won lots of grants to make two more shorts, using 35mm film and real lights.”

—Joyce Draganosky, writer/director/producer/editor,
jared, *Extreme Mom*, *The Science of Love*

“When you can’t afford to make a movie, just create a flip-book on a pad of Post-Its.”

—Dave Gebroe, writer/director/producer,
Zombie Honeymoon

“There was the time I shot 16mm film of a Steenbeck screen running 16mm footage. I sped it up and slowed it down at will: It was my cheap, homemade optical printer, and worked great!”

—Francesca Talenti, producer/animator, *The Planets*

“I used several lengths of PVC plumbing pipes to make a track over uneven ground. It involved cutting a slit in the pipes, which is easy as they are plastic, and attaching two legs of a tripod to a smaller ‘torpedo’ pipe running inside. It made a really long and smooth track over huge distances in a field.”

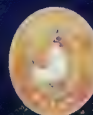
—Gregory Copeland, writer/director,
A Rock N’ Roll Legacy: Ayatollah & The Heretics;
Salsa: The Story of Rico’s Two Passions

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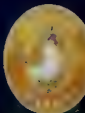
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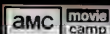
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FILM FESTIVAL

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EDITOR'S LETTER

Dear Readers,

When we were growing up, my brother had a friend who called our house: "The Carrolls, where kids are king." Compared to his house, where his parents made conventional rules, sent him to camp, and expected primarily manners and reverence from their children, our house might as well have been the Land of Oz. My parents, both artists, taught us how to make books and catch fish, encouraged us to write plays and poems, and, generally speaking, made the very idea of camp seem kind of ridiculous. We felt cherished and attended to, smart and creative—because our parents spent time with us, and although it could be argued that living in 1960s rural New Hampshire afforded them the luxury to do so, I am determined to find a way in millennium New York City to make my kid feel like a king.

And that means, for starters, if I'm going to spend consolidated time away from him, the job had better be worth it. I have loved my tenure as Editor at *The Independent*. And I am tremendously proud of what I have achieved in terms of broadening the magazine's scope, diversifying its content, and enhancing the quality of writing to a more literary level. But it's become clear to me (nothing like having a kid to put things into perspective right quick) that I've taken the magazine and my position here as far as I can. And so, the next issue—January/February 2006—will be my last.

In this issue, however, we are looking at the beautiful art of documentary

film—the telling of true stories, or stories that are mostly true, or let's say stories that are based on truth...mostly.

Our First Person column comes from writer and sociologist Christopher Bonastia, who smartly makes the association between the recent onslaught of (perhaps too) personal memoirs and documentaries in which the filmmaker is the subject. And even more smartly suggests that if, as a documentary filmmaker, you're going to make a film about yourself, "you better be pretty damn fascinating." (page 20)

New to our pages, LA-based writer Malik Gaines fills us in from On the Scene at the REDCAT (Roy And Edna Disney/CalArts Theater) in LA, where the almost unsettlingly brilliant artist Kara Walker's multimedia exhibition "Song of the South" opened in September, featuring overhead projections, a shadow puppet performance, and a new 16mm film: "8 Possible Beginnings or the Creation of African-America. A Moving Picture by the young, self-taught, Genius of the South K.E. Walker." How's that for a true story? (page 27)

Contributing writer Lisa Selin Davis talked to filmmaker Jem Cohen, whose latest film *Chain* takes on shopping centers and strip malls in a somewhat scripted, somewhat non-scripted way, which according to Cohen, is actually where the truth and the art of it lies: "What I find most satisfying is that people who go to the movie are unsure as to where the documentary slips off and where the narrative begins." (page 32)

Also, associate editor Katherine Dykstra on Docurama (page 36); a profile of documentary filmmaker Jennifer Fox (page 40); and narrative filmmaker and Movieside Film Festival founder Rusty Nails discovers he likes making documentaries (page 44).

Enjoy, and thanks for reading
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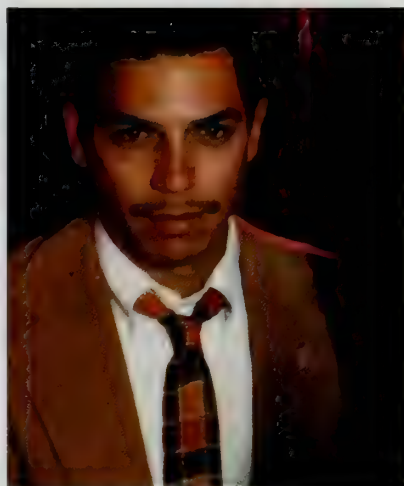


CHRISTOPHER BONASTIA is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Sociology at the City University of New York, Lehman College. His book, *Knocking on the Door: The Federal Government's Attempt to Desegregate the Suburbs*, will be published in 2006 by Princeton University Press. As a journalist, his writing has appeared in *The New*

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RUSTY NAILS is a filmmaker, actor, writer, and the director of the Movieside Film Festival (the world's largest short film festival). In addition to his feature film *Acne*, he is collecting 16 short films for an upcoming DVD release. He is currently in post-production of the doc features *Highway Robbery* and *Dead On: The Life and Cinema of George A. Romero*. He is currently working on the script for a horror drama called *Teenagers From Mars*. Mr. Nails has written for *Stop Smiling Magazine*, *Supersphere.com*, *Venus Magazine* among others. For film info: www.neweyefilms.com. For festival info: www.movieside.com.

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FERNANDA ROSSI, known as the Documentary Doctor, is a filmmaker and story consultant who helps filmmakers craft the story structure of their films in all stages of the filmmaking process. She has doctored over 100 documentaries and fiction scripts, and is the author of *Trailer Mechanics: A Guide to Making Your Documentary Fundraising Trailer*. For more info: www.documentarydoctor.com.

HOLLY WILLIS is the author of *New Digital Cinema: Reinventing the Moving Image* (Wallflower Press), which chronicles the advent of digital filmmaking tools and their impact on contemporary media practices. She is also the former editor of *RES Magazine*, a bimonthly publication devoted to experiments in film, video, and new media, and she has written extensively on experimental media practices for a variety of publications. She currently teaches classes in film, video, and new media at USC, Art Center College of Design and California Institute of the Arts.



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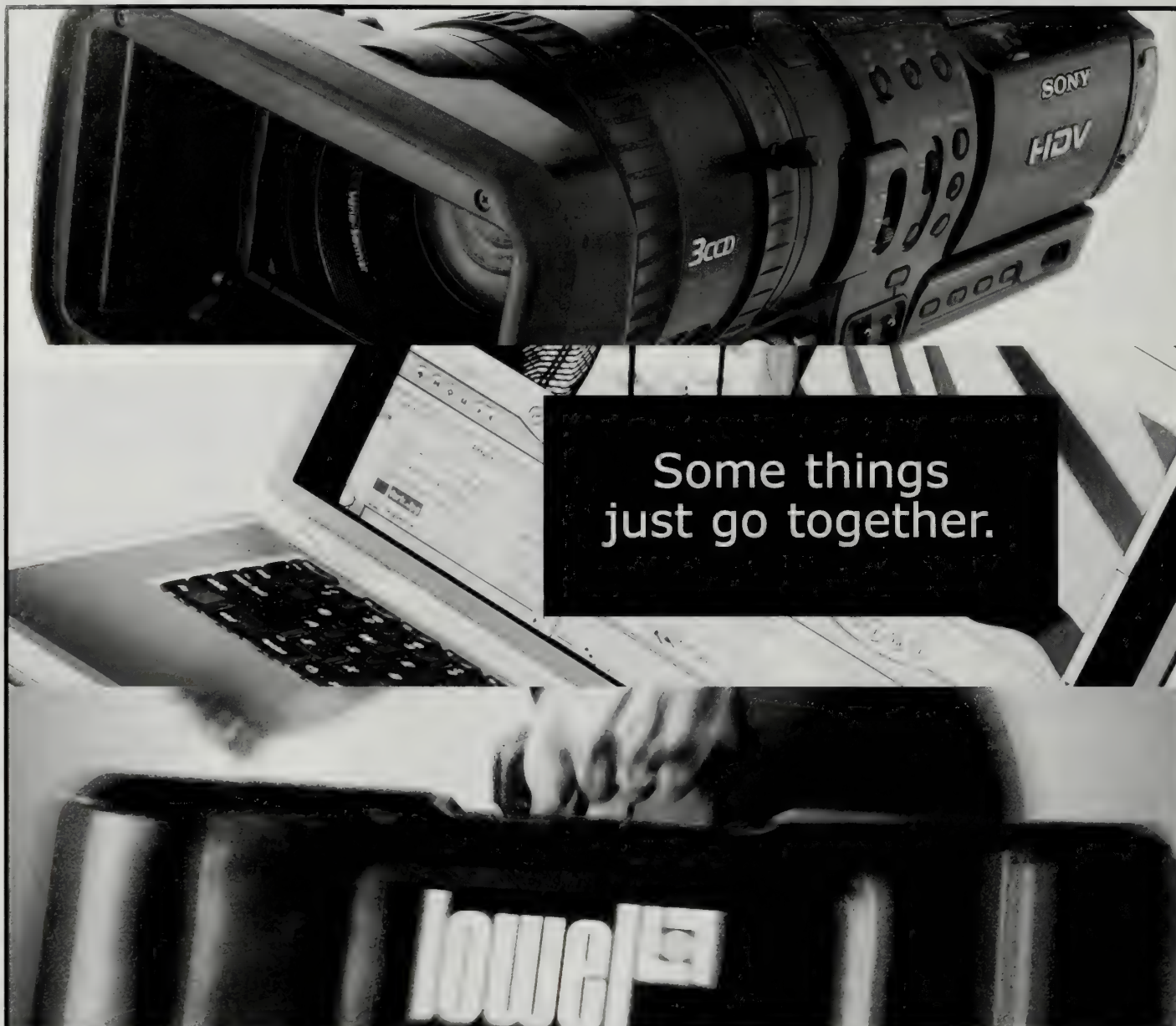
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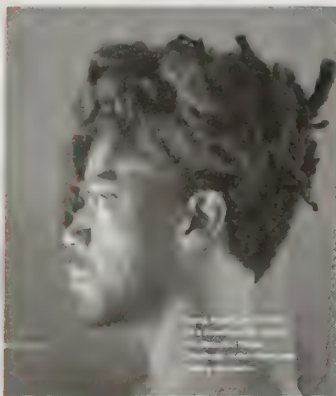


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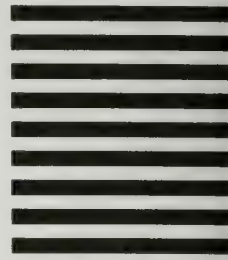
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NEWS

Full Frame Ahead

St. Clair Bourne will curate a festival series in 2006



Filmmaker St. Clair Bourne [photo courtesy of Chamba Notes]

By Michelle Orange

From *Harvest of Shame* (Edward R. Murrow's broadcast about migrant workers, 1960) to *Titicut Follies* (Frederick Wiseman, 1967) to *The Thin Blue Line* (Errol Morris, 1988), and the Rodney King tapes, from the most intricately crafted films to pieces of tape that simply say "this happened," the power of documentary to open the eye is indubitable. In recent years the form's popular resurgence seems to have redoubled that power, and Full Frame Documentary Film Festival founder Nancy Buirski is confident that come April 2006 she'll have a lineup of films that demand to be seen.

Part of that confidence comes with the recruitment of acclaimed documentary filmmaker St. Clair Bourne, whose films include *Dr. Ben* (2001) and *Nothing But Common Sense* (1972), to curate a series of six, two-hour documentaries focusing on issues of class in America.

Bourne, who began his career as a television producer working on shows like "Black Journal" and "Sesame Street" during one of public television's richest periods in the late 1960s, formed the still operational Chamba Mediaworks in 1971 launching his career as a producer and director of films that explore issues

of African-American heritage in the context of America's eruption-prone, socio-political landscape.

"I attempt to show the folly of trying to operate under a capitalist system by looking at people who have done it and the price they paid," says Bourne, who has directed documentaries about Langston Hughes, Paul Robeson, Amiri Baraka, and Gordon Parks. The Full Frame series is an opportunity that Bourne is looking forward to because, as he points out, there just aren't that many American films that deal with the subject directly.

"There's *American Dream* and *People*



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Like Us and *Finally Got the News*, but I don't think there are nearly as many as there should be," he says. At press time, Bourne had already received about two dozen submissions for the series, and his hope was that he could put together a program that illustrates "where class ends and race begins, and vice versa." He believes that the two are inextricably bound and that too often issues of class are used to avoid dealing with issues of race. Bourne is quick to point out, however, that his choices will include all perspectives and all races citing *American Hollow*, a documentary by Rory Kennedy about a poor white family in eastern Kentucky, as an example of a possible film for the series.

When asked about his hopes for these films finding a larger audience, Bourne is frank, if determined. Public television retains a special place in Bourne's heart, but he is angered that no one seems to be speaking up for an outlet that is "captive to the Bush agenda," he says. "I'm in favor of anything that democratizes the public conversation, and that's what public television used to do. Now it's back to animals, bugs, and God." Bourne was about to pitch a 9/11 documentary about Islam and Africa when we spoke. He admitted it would be a tough sell: "The political climate has done its job in that it has made people back off from political subjects. This makes the Full Frame series even more imperative.

Nancy Buirski says the decision to invite Bourne to curate was easy: "I admire his work enormously, and I've always wanted to work with him. The issue of class is wrapped up in issues of color in this country, and that's part of what makes St. Claire such a good fit—he's a tremendous advocate for that kind of discourse."

Buirski points to Hurricane Katrina and the problems it brought to the fore as the impetus for the program and its theme. "Hurricane Katrina was a huge eye-opener," she says. "There was an immediate conversation about class and poverty that came out of the aftermath." In addition to Bourne's program, Full Frame will also feature a "Southern



Married filmmakers Chris Hegedus (left) and DA Pennebaker (right) [photo courtesy of PH Films]

Sidebar”—a selection of films dealing specifically with Katrina, for which Buirski is still accepting submissions. “It’s time for film to address the subject [of class],” says Buirski. “People tend to think of class systems as archaic, they think of far-off places and castes, but class systems are just as present here. This is why we believe in documentary, we believe in its power to bear witness to society.”

Film Your Issue Begins Round Two

It was one of those “what if” scenarios spun over lunch with a friend, one that usually gets cleared away with the plates, but when you’re HeathCliff Rothman and your lunch partner is an animation executive at Disney, things tend to go a little differently. The idea behind Film Your Issue came while they were discussing the possibility of producing short films to inspire youth to get out and vote in the 2004 election: What if you were able to have the peo-

ple you’re trying to reach make their own films? In other words and in the finest of cinematic traditions: “Hey kids, let’s put on a show!”

What resulted is an extremely ambitious competition, an opportunity for seven million college students to find a voice and have it be heard. The objective is to encourage students between the ages of 18 and 25 to make a 30-to 60-second film on an issue affecting their lives. Entries are judged by a VIP jury and voted for online; finalists have their films posted on www.msn.com and the winning entry is broadcast on MTV. The winning filmmaker also receives a paid internship at Paramount Pictures.

Round one of the competition drew 100 submissions last year, and although Rothman is happy with those results, he sees room for improvement and believes he will see a considerable increase in the number of entries for round two, which will open January 1, 2006 and close in the late spring. His belief is well found-

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ed, he recently added MTV to his dream team of backers in place since round one—Microsoft Corporation, which will promote FYI on the MSN and MSNBC websites, and Paramount. VIP judges will include writers from the *New York Times*, *Newsweek*, the *Washington Post*, and the Advisory Think Tank, which is chockfull of representatives from companies like Dreamworks and Disney. “There’s very little downside for [the backers],” Rothman says. “And people are much more willing to get on board if it’s a philanthropic cause.”

To that end, FYI is adding a subcategory to Round Two, which will encourage students to make a film that addresses one of the eight Millennium Development Goals the United Nations set to be reached by 2015 (eradicating extreme hunger and ensuring global sustainability among them), with the winning film to be screened at UN Headquarters in New York. Rothman says they are still shaping the criteria for other entries, though ideally students would be encouraged “to be as unzipped as possible: I want arguments! I want indignation!” There may be a fine line between “unzipped” and “untenable,” given the sponsors involved, but Rothman isn’t too worried. “We’re interested to see what young people are thinking about, and it’s such a surprise,” he says, citing that the first FYI submission he saw was an argument against gay marriage. “By making a film, they have to engage their issue through storytelling. They have to think it through a bit more.”

The biggest challenge this year may in fact be figuring out how to handle the number of submissions they receive. “Response has been snowballing,” says Rothman. “We’re thinking about a contingency plan to handle, say, 5000 entries instead of 100.”

Pennebaker and Hegedus awarded IDA’s Career Achievement Award

Christmas came early this year for husband and wife team DA Pennebaker and Chris Hegedus—December 9th to be exact. On that day the illustrious couple became an official institution in

the documentary world when the International Documentary Association granted them the Career Achievement Award. They join a pantheon of previous recipients including Marcel Ophüls, Frederick Wiseman, and Sir David Attenborough among others. The honor was presented at the 21st Annual IDA Distinguished Documentary Achievement Awards Benefit Gala in Los Angeles.

With over 50 films between them, Pennebaker, who turns 80 this year, and Hegedus began working together in the mid-70s after they met in New York. Their collaborations include *Town Bloody Hall* (1979), the infamous women’s lib smackdown between Norman Mailer and Germaine Greer, *DeLorean* (1981), a profile of the Italian automobile magnate, and *The War Room*, an all-access pass to the 1992 presidential campaign of Bill Clinton, which earned the couple an Oscar nomination.

“D.A. Pennebaker and Chris Hegedus richly deserve this recognition from their peers,” says IDA Executive Director Sandra Ruch in a recent statement. “They are principled, dedicated and talented storytellers whose films have made a positive difference in our world.”

IDA President Richard Propper calls the duo “a source of inspiration for the next generation of nonfiction filmmakers.” They might also be an inspiration for his and hers creative partnerships. Married since 1982, they are currently working on a film about cuddly blowhard, liberal poster-boy Al Franken and were thrilled at the news of IDA’s honor. “Making films is difficult,” says Pennebaker. “A good film can take more than a year and require a lot of struggling. You feel like you’re wrestling an 800-pound bear. So you want people to see your films, and the IDA is helpful that way.”

“The IDA has created a wonderful community in which documentary filmmakers can celebrate each other’s hard work and labors of love,” Hegedus says. “They spread the word that documentaries are interesting and entertaining and valuable and thought-provoking.” ★

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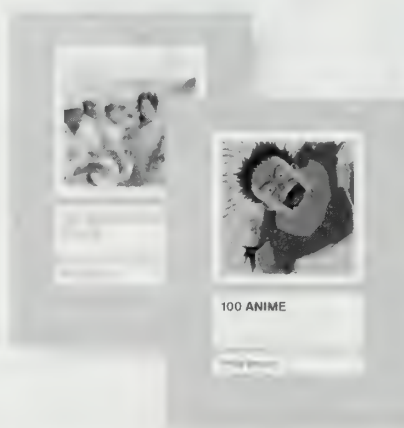
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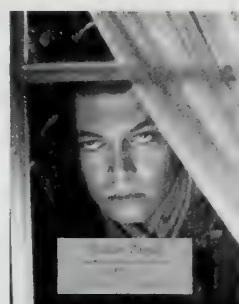
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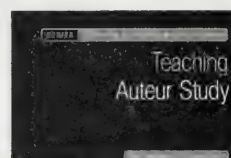
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By David Alm

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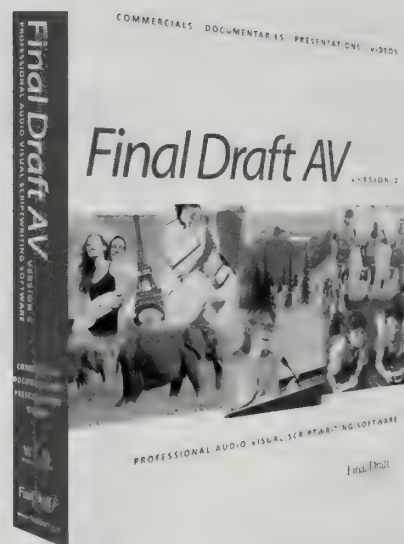
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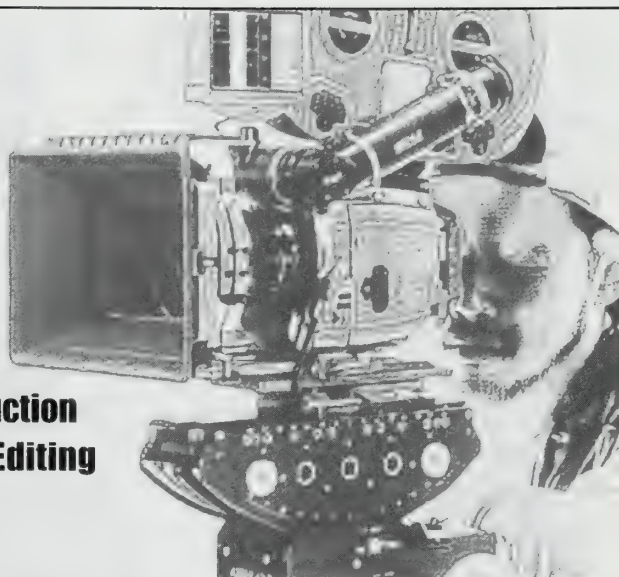
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Photojournalist, director. Two-time Emmy winner. Covered conflicts globally for *Nightline*, *Now*, *Newsweek*

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Producer/Director. PBS specials. ITVS funding SILVERDOCS premiere. Screenings at Museum of Modern Art and Kennedy Center. Fellowships: Harvard Bunting and Rockefeller Media Arts.

Gary Griffin

Cinematographer. Winner, Best Documentary Cinematography, Sundance, 2005. Cinematographer for Oscar-winning and Oscar-nominated documentaries. Work shown on HBO, CNN, PBS, ABC, A&E

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Photographer/video artist. Exhibitions at Arthur M. Sackler Gallery; the Washington Project for the Arts/Corcoran Gallery of Art.

Larry Kirkman

Executive Producer/Producer. Documentaries and public affairs specials for public television; NEA and CPB funding. Juror, SILVERDOCS, 2003

Brigid Maher

Director, editor, digital media designer. Fulbright Scholar, Lebanon.

Chris Palmer

Producer. Director, Center for Environmental Filmmaking. Two-time Emmy winner; Oscar nominee. Kennedy Scholar, Harvard. Producer of IMAX films

Rick Rockwell

Producer. Films shown on local public and commercial television. Awards from AP, UPI, SPJ, RTNDA

Margaret Burnette Stogner

Producer, director, writer. Senior producer, National Geographic's *Explorer* and *Ultimate Explorer*. Winner, Nicholl Screenwriting Fellowship.

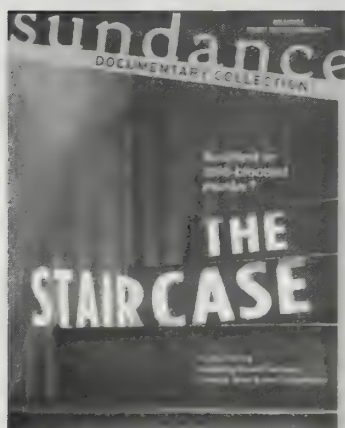
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on DVD

Reviews of films now available on DVD

By Shana Liebman



THE STAIRCASE

Honestly, I didn't plan on watching all seven hours of *The Staircase*, certainly not in a row...until 3 am. But this riveting series, which was shown one episode at a time on the Sundance Channel, is hard to turn off, and hard to forget. Director Jean-Xavier de Lestrade, who also directed the excellent Oscar-winning *Murder on a Sunday Morning* (2001), has made a thrilling drama out of a true story: Michael Peterson was accused of killing his wife Kathleen one evening after the couple drank too much wine, and shortly after Kathleen found a love-email from her husband to a gay man. Over the next eight episodes, as a high-powered New York defense attorney and his team dissect and present the case, we get to evaluate all the evidence (which direction was the blood splattered?), hear all the possible scenarios, and spend intimate time with the couple's children and stepchildren—all of whom have different opinions about what really happened. The verdict is unpredictable (and surprising) up until the final courtroom scene, but it's really the brilliantly crafted exposé of one complicated man's life and mind that makes this film so compelling. www.sundancechannelhomeentertainment.com.

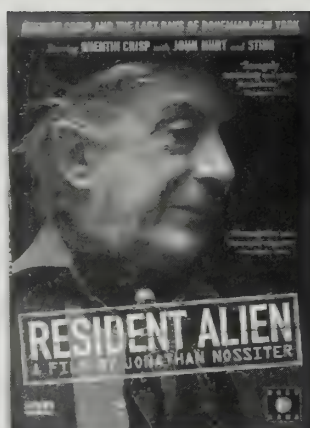


RATED R: REPUBLICANS IN HOLLYWOOD

In this relatively fair, if occasionally tedious, documentary, former democratic speechwriter Jesse Moss argues that not even Hollywood—largely perceived as a left-leaning industry—has escaped the current conservative tidal wave. Arnold's campaign for governor is one convincing example, but we already know the outcome and the repercussions of that race which kind of kills the suspense. Plus, Moss allows the former Terminator too much air time. Interviews with Ben Stein, Drew Carey, Pat Sajak, and "the shockingly Republican" Vincent Gallo (whose affiliation has gotten him way too much attention already) are sometimes funny, sometimes predictable. But outspoken actors having something to say isn't exactly news, or really all that entertaining. www.docurama.com.

RESIDENT ALIEN

"Maladjustment in retreat, in the face of oppression" is how one sociologist explains the late Quentin Crisp, an authentically and flamboyantly eccentric writer/performer/gay rights activist who died in 1999. After 73 years in England, Crisp came to New York hoping to find the beautiful and rich Americans he'd admired in movies. As filmmaker

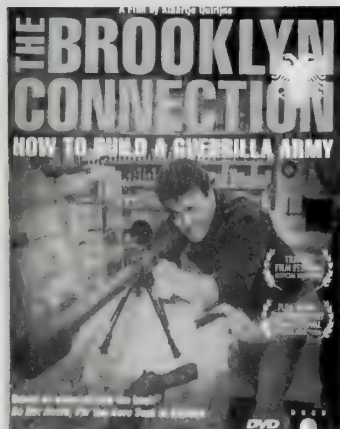


Jonathan Nossiter (*Mondovino*, 2004, *Sunday*, 1997, *Signs & Wonders*, 2000) tries to illustrate with long scenes of Crisp walking and talking with various friends and celebrities through Manhattan's streets, Crisp loved and became beloved in New York City during his last decade. Nossiter's portrait allows us to see why so many artists, eccentrics, and members of the Gay and Lesbian Center found him appealing: the effeminate oddball was a precious novelty and a professional weirdo with his blue eye shadow and white poufy hair—more of a comb-up than a comb-over, and ironic since he lived in a dump. As *The Village Voice's* Michael Musto puts it: "He was good TV." www.docurama.com.

FLIGHT FROM DEATH: THE QUEST FOR IMMORTALITY

Gabriel Byrne's soothing, intelligent voice asking, "What are we to do with death, and why should we fear it?" is a powerful hook. The tone is conspiratorial, and the issue couldn't be more provocative or universally intriguing. A series of interviews with authors, academics and psychiatrists promise a satisfying film. But somewhere along the way, this deeply dramatic doc starts to feel frantic and unorganized. While the history of the ways in which humans have considered, conceptualized,

and reacted to their own mortality is invariably an interesting discussion, there are too many attempted answers crammed into a small space, and each seems desperately illustrated with a relevant visual. The result is an overload of ideas and images, many of them powerful, but which on the whole don't really form a coherent train of



thought. The best thread is the case of one woman who is dying of breast cancer—her thoughtful, emotional, idiosyncratic consideration of her own situation illuminates the lack of those qualities in the rest of the film. www.flightfromdeath.com

THE BROOKLYN CONNECTION: HOW TO BUILD A GUERRILLA ARMY

This frightening examination of global politics tells the true story of Florin Krasniqi, a roofer in Bay Ridge, Brooklyn, who armed the Kosovo Liberation Army (the bin Laden-trained, Iran-backed narco-terrorists whose 1999 jihad against the Christian Serbs we helped fight) by transporting guns from the US to Kosovo. Dutch filmmaker Klaartje Quirijns based the film, which aired on PBS and won Special Jury Prize at the Human Rights International Film Festival, on Stacy Sullivan's book *Be Not Afraid, For You Have Sons in America*. It's an important history lesson about the US's unwilling participation in the Balkan conflict, with many great scenes like the one of Krasniqi writing checks at a 2003 John Kerry fundraiser. It's also a good example of a political documentary's potential to affect change: Quirijns says her film inspired the Department of Homeland Security to launch an investigation into Krasniqi. www.docurama.com.

A Guide for the Curious Film Lover



RECOMMENDED BY THE FILM CRITICS
OF THE NEW YORK TIMES

Edited by PETER M. NICHOLS
With an Introduction by A.O. SCOTT

*The Best DVDs You've Never Seen,
Just Missed or Almost Forgotten.* Edited
by Peter M. Nichols, St. Martin's
Griffen, 2005

In A.O. Scott's introduction to *The Best DVDs You've Never Seen, Just Missed or Almost Forgotten*, the well-known *New York Times* critic suggests that DVD-viewers are now caught in a dilemma not unlike Hamlet's: immobilized by the seemingly infinite pool of possibilities (thanks to Netflix) and too overwhelmed to make a decision. The list that follows—over 500 films that the *Times*'s editors praised in previous reviews—is an attempt to help us angst a little less. Although every list is subjective and somewhat random, this one, edited by the former *Times* DVD reviewer Peter M. Nichols, at least assumes our knowledge of the classics and the blockbusters, highlighting instead a more obscure range of films that may not have reached our radar. The list is a good mix of decades and genres—from little known docs to mainstream comedies—and includes TV shows and miniseries like “The Office” and *Angels in America*. Each film gets about a page description carefully written without any spoilers, and though the alphabetized selections are not ranked, they are neatly categorized into genres in the back of the book. It's a useful tool to navigate the excess—as well as a fun read. It's also kind of refreshing to hear the usually cynical *Times* critics say some kind things about film for a change. ★

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Is Documentary the New Memoir?

A sociologist's view
from the couch



By Christopher Bonastia

I am a sociologist who conducts historical research on race and social policy, so my work has something in common with a documentary filmmaker's attempt to uncover some version of "the truth" (however defined). Maybe this is just my sociological training leaking out, but when I watch a documentary—especially a highly personal, idiosyncratic one—I want to see the bigger picture as well. What is the larger social context in which

the story unfolds? Does the story tell me something about anyone or anything other than you? If not, you had better be pretty damn fascinating. And that does happen sometimes. But there appear to be a growing number of documentaries that come off more as exercises in self-help than as expressions of artistic vision with the intention of connecting with an audience.

Jonathan Caouette's critical darling

Jonathan Caouette's *Tarnation* (left) and Nathaniel Kahn's *My Architect* (right) are examples of docs serving as self-help

Tarnation (2003) is a prime example of documentary as self-help or, more pointedly, catharsis for the filmmaker. Caouette leaves no grisly detail of his life unexposed, using original, found, and staged, audio and visual sources. I was astounded to learn that the final cut of one hour and twenty-five minutes is less than half the length of the original. If the footage of his boyfriend making snow angels survived, one can only imagine what was edited out. (I guess we'll find out when *Tarnation 2* is released.)

I agree with much of the praise heaped upon *Tarnation*—it is stunningly self-indulgent, yes, yet undeniably original in concept and execution. The content of the film is disturbing, rife with allegations of child abuse, the debilitating effects of unnecessary shock treatments, and other tragedies, small and large. But what really scares me is the potential impact of *Tarnation* on future “self-help” films without equally powerful and skilled storytelling. Beware of imitators who feel empowered by Caouette. We are likely to witness the Led Zeppelin effect—a band that spawned countless horrible copycats who lacked the distinctive banshee screech and prodigious chest hair of Robert Plant, and the memorably crunchy guitar riffs of Jimmy Page.

Several recent documentary releases are by no means horrible films or even *Tarnation* imitations, but they do certain-

ly highlight the cringe potential in self-help documentaries. Nathaniel Kahn's *My Architect: A Son's Journey* (2003) documents the filmmaker's quest to understand his father, Louis Kahn (who died in 1974), a brilliant building designer who juggled three families in secrecy. Nathaniel only met his father a handful of times throughout his childhood.

In *Architect*, we get to see people in Bangladesh marvel at the building Kahn designed. This is interesting. What is not so interesting is Nathaniel's face reflected in the microfilm he is reading, or Nathaniel watching an interview with Kahn's wife. We don't need to see numerous shots of Nathaniel holding his camera, gazing wistfully. This sort of literal self-reflection is no less heavy-handed than the metaphorical kind—to wit, Nathaniel rollerblading in pirouettes on the grounds of a building his father designed. When I asked two film-buff friends of mine if they had seen the film, they both immediately mentioned the hokey transparency behind this particular scene, which somehow manages to come off as both an incredibly private moment that should stay that way, and a remarkably contrived, made-for-film means to manipulate. The purpose of therapy, as I understand it, is to unravel the emotions and experiences inside you, unedited, so you can process them. When you seek an audience of more than your therapist,

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Mark Costello, Esq.

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some editing is required to turn your experiences into an actual narrative.

Another documentary, *Spit It Out* (2004), a little-known (and probably lesser-seen) film by Jeff Shames about his lifelong struggle with stuttering, comes to mind. Shames vaguely links his stuttering, a topic that has personal resonance for me as I have also stuttered throughout my life, to mistreatment he experienced by his father. We are never told that the causes of stuttering are still poorly understood, although most research points to biological, not social, factors. I suppose it's hard to get a good, made-for-documentary cry when you're talking about genetics.

This trend of obsessive self-documentation goes beyond the film world. In the past several years a flood of memoirs, in many ways the literary counterpart to docs, have hit the shelves chock-full of resolute self-involvement. Perhaps the most striking recent example of this sort of memoir is Koren Zailckas' *Smashed: The Story of a Drunken Girlhood* (2005), documenting the hard-drinking (but not alcoholic) life of a 23-year-old woman who did some dumb (but not tragic) stuff when she drank a lot. Zailckas certainly



STORY OF A DRUNKEN GIRLHOOD KOREN ZAILCKAS



shows some potential as a writer. To enjoy it, however, the reader has to plough through some passages that shouldn't have left her journal. Recalling one of her first experiences with alcohol, Zailckas writes: "I...know what Columbus must have felt when he washed up on the American shore. Drinking has always been, but it's a New World to me. It's been waiting for me to discover it." And, like Columbus did with America, promptly proceeds to strip away all that's good about drinking and make it into kind of a bummer. But I digress.

Why now?

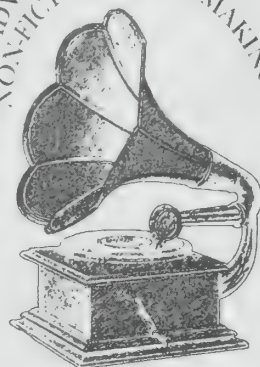
We can hardly blame people for wanting to immortalize their lives or at least add the sheen of credibility to their personal stories by turning their experiences into cultural products. But why are companies selling so much of this stuff, and consumers buying these exercises in solipsism? Self-involvement is, of course, nothing new. In the film world, probably the biggest factor is the increase in cheap do-it-yourself technology that allows almost anyone to document the most

microscopic details of their existence and make them available to the larger public. There is a lot of good in this. Caouette's ability to record large chunks of his life and edit them into a real film on his home computer, at very little cost, would not have been possible 30 years ago. When I first started recording music, I couldn't release an album until I convinced someone to foot the bill to master my digital audiotape and press up a stack of records (club deejays didn't play CD's then). Now I can burn a CD with decent packaging for the cost of a pack of gum. Even if only a few friends and my four-month-old son hear it, it *looks* real, and I can say I have a new album out.

I guess I shouldn't be surprised that people think their creations merit sharing, since I am guilty of this as well. Cheap technology has made it possible to bypass the traditional gatekeepers of culture: book publishers, film producers, record labels, and so on. Perhaps even more interesting are the things these traditional gatekeepers have discovered. The big benefit to the not-yet-famous is that they are much cheaper to hire. You can

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make almost anyone look and sound good (helpful in manufacturing recording stars). Just as important, you can make almost anyone look completely ridiculous, crazy or pathetic (helpful in producing reality shows).

What's the harm?

Sometimes self-serving, sometimes self-incriminating, and sometimes both, the problem with self-help documentaries is the collateral damage, as once again, *Tarnation* illustrates vividly. When Caouette asks his mother, clearly somewhat debilitated from a recent lithium overdose, some highly painful questions, she protests: "We don't need it on film." His disagreement courses through *Tarnation*, as he ensnares other family members in his therapeutic exercise, despite their objections. Given their mental states, his mother and grandparents arguably could not have given their consent to be included in the film.

A second problem with these kinds of films is the message they send along with the rest of our therapeutic culture: Namely, that the problems of the world can be solved merely by navel-gazing, not through engagement with the world, helping others, and digging deeper. Perhaps the biggest problem is that the urge to share your every musing with the world is contagious. I now feel compelled to exhume moments from my life that I previously thought were merely absurd or funny to me, but that I realize are worthy of widespread recognition.

High school, 1984, Jersey suburbs, a late spring night with a hint of summer steam, bullshitting with my best friend Pigo in his mom's Toyota station wagon, basking in the delusion of profundity stoked by the Garden State's finest pot. Ahead of our time, as usual, we saw the attraction of self-documentation—recording our teenage rantings sure made the safe, boring world of north Jersey feel more dramatic. In doing so, we also stumbled upon one of the troubling dilemmas of this whole endeavor:

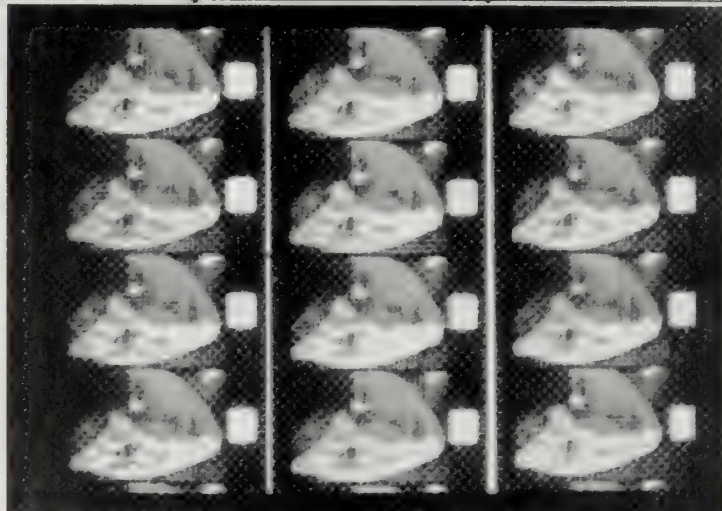
"Imagine if you taped your whole life."
"But when would you watch it?"

Two decades later, the question has become: "How would you get a bunch of other people to watch it?" ★

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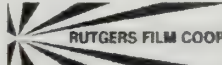
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ASK

THE DOCUMENTARY DOCTOR

By Fernanda Rossi

Dear Doc Doctor:

I've been asked for a business plan for my documentary. I thought those types of things were only for fiction films. Do I really need to write one?

Documentary makers are finally seeing the effects of the recent growth of the documentary market. It's a unique moment in history. Similar to independent fiction films over the last 30 years, docs have climbed the distribution and exhibition ladders and their current box office success is a hard-earned blessing—but one that means they now have to step up to certain business demands.

"The continuing success of documentaries at the theatrical box office—most recently of *March of the Penguins*, which is now the second highest grossing documentary of all time with \$70 million—has shifted the perceptions and expectations of those who invest in independent films," says Reed Martin, the author of numerous business plans and a professor of film marketing at New York University's Stern School of Business. "Years ago they might have donated money to support the cause or 'invested' with little hope of ever seeing a return. However, today, documentaries are increasingly seen as potentially viable



investments and because there is the potential of significant profits, investors increasingly want to see projected revenues listed in formal business plans."

The good news is that the rise in popularity of documentaries isn't a passing fad. The downside, having to write a business plan, is not as bad as you might think, especially if it means your pool of potential investors and their respective investments will increase. And if you have ever applied for a grant, you already know quite a bit about business plans. Louise Levison, business plan consultant

and author of *Filmmakers and Financing: Business Plans for Independents*, says, "The business plan format for a doc—exec summary, company, synopsis, industry, target markets, distribution, financial analysis—is the same as for any other film and similar to much of the information that you need for a grant request. Whereas one prospectus (including an investment memorandum) can go to as many investors as you like, the grant request has to be tailored specifically and separately for each granting source."

The prospectus's comparative financial analysis can be a bit of challenge because there aren't yet a lot of documentaries with theatrical releases to use as a comparison. But as more and more documentaries hit theaters, even this aspect of the plan will seem simple.

Dear Doc Doctor:

I did quite well with my previous documentary, and now I'm being offered a lot of projects. I already know what my next documentary will be, but I don't want to burn bridges with those who had such high expectations about working with me. What's the best way to decline their offers?

Spotlights can be blinding, and I commend you for having kept your focus in the myriad of tempting options. Even more kudos to you for wanting to figure

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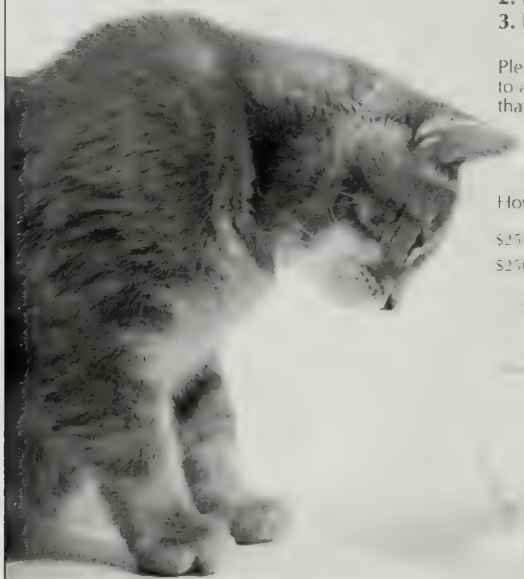
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out how to decline involvement in a respectful, friendly way. Success in the film business often involves knowing how to handle these small details. Surely you have been turned down many times, but we rarely realize that we have our own share of nos to deliver. We tend to say no the way it was said to us, thereby perpetuating a cycle of bad etiquette.

Let's start by mentioning what *not* to do. Not returning phone calls is the worst possible option, yet the most common one. Some might think being unavailable is a sign of their importance, power, or a tight schedule. For me, it shows a lack of time-management skills, combined with cowardice. Whether it is a prospective DP, editor, or filmmaker's proposal sitting on your desk, answer their calls. After all, they talked to you when you requested it.

The next no-no is drawing a blank face or giving a half-hearted compliment such as "Good, looks good!" followed by a change of topic. Not as bad but equally non-conducive is, "Let me think about it," followed by never returning a call and/or hiding in the corner when you bump into that person at a party.

Having to say no builds anxiety and might propel you into a monologue of all things wrong with the project or the person. Be spare with your words—the things you see wrong with the film might end up being the reasons it wins an Oscar.

Instead of criticizing, ask questions. Maybe you are missing the point. Maybe the person doesn't pitch well or doesn't represent their producing or editing skills well. And if it's still a "no way, Jose," then stay away from comments like: I proclaim you unworthy of me, my company, and everything I touch. A more accurate representation of the situation would be something like: "At this moment, given these particular circumstances, this is not a good match." If in addition you can offer some resources and/or recommendations of other doors to knock on, then you have really paved your way to film-making sanctity. ★

Fernanda Rossi is a filmmaker and story consultant, and the author of Trailer Mechanics: A Guide to Making your Documentary Fundraising Trailer.

By Malik Gaines

At the opening reception for Kara Walker's multi-media project "Song of the South" at downtown LA's REDCAT Gallery, the artist adopted the eerily detached voice of a little girl playing with her dolls. "Help us! Help us!" she cried while perched behind a semitransparent



Kara Walker at REDCAT

8 Possible Beginnings or the Creation of African-America

screen maneuvering little shadow puppets that had been overcome by a rear-projected flood. The silhouetted figures, stars of both Walker's new 16mm film and this puppet performance, looked like wispy elves of the American South, with cotton blossoms for heads and leafy black limbs, carried by water and wind to who-knows-where. As the audience sat rapt, Walker breathed disquieting life into her iconic work: a dark, anachronistic fantasy of African America, made all-too-real in two dimensions of black and white.

Apt timing has been a hallmark of Walker's intriguing and often controversial career, and this puppet show, long-

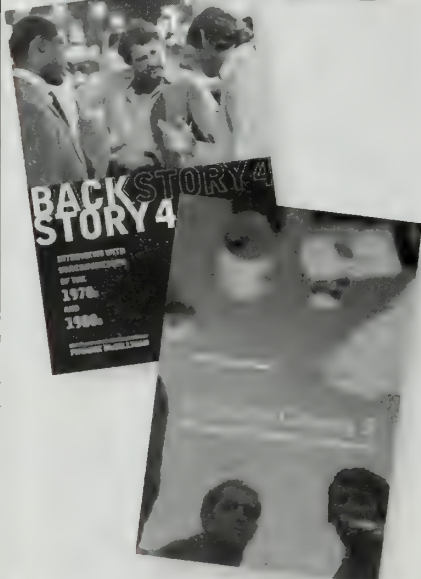
scheduled to inaugurate her new film and installation, happened to coincide with the disaster in New Orleans still unfolding several days after Hurricane Katrina struck the Gulf Coast. Amid one of the greatest racial spectacles of our time, the artist performed with an elusive air of mimicry and mystery. Walker, whose work is by now quite familiar to art audiences, consistently offers stark and grotesque images of race without the pressure release that an agenda of activism or the catharsis of emotion can provide. After introducing some of

the puppet characters who appear throughout the interdisciplinary project, one of Walker's shadow figures, a black woman protagonist who seemed to be a surrogate for the artist herself, opened the floor for questions. Ending some awkward silence, a well-meaning white



(Top) Kara Walker's "Song of the South" 2005 installation, cut wood with projections; (bottom) Walker's "Song of the South" 2005 performance documentation, both from the REDCAT gallery, LA, September 2, 2005 [Photos by Scott Groller]

MAKING MOVIES



A Critical Cinema 5

Interviews with
Independent Filmmakers

BY SCOTT MACDONALD

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Images above and right from Kara Walker's "Song of the South" 2005 installation, cut wood with projections, REDCAT gallery, Los Angeles [Photos by Scott Groller]

woman near the back of the room asked for a response to the natural disaster at hand. The questioner commented, a bit tritely, that the botched emergency relief was tinged with racism. Walker and her puppet responded with utter indifference, mocking the question and questioner, and finally adding with razor-sharp sarcasm, "I can tell you are a very good person."

It is this iconoclastic attitude that permeates Walker's black-and-white film, *8 Possible Beginnings or the Creation of African-America: A Moving Picture by the young, self-taught, Genius of the South K.E. Walker*. In eight short chapters, various creation myths are explored and espoused. Here again, shadow puppets enact the narratives in a natural extension of Walker's past work with silhouettes. The film though has a charming amateurishness to it that is lacking elsewhere in Walker's body of work. This is due in part to the 16mm medium itself, which always reminds one of a film-school exercise. But also, the piece is made with a loose, do-it-yourself technique and tells its story in disjointed moments, all of

which add up to an impressionistic experience rather than a concrete narrative arc. This overall lack of slickness helps lighten the load of Walker's heavy content while dislodging the artist's post-colonial mix of influences from academic stodginess. Despite its treacherous race-baiting and some frank pornographic moments, the film is accessible and quite entertaining.

One live actor, much voice-over dialogue, and a few appropriated antique images, such as an old illustration of a white ship crew throwing naked black bodies overboard, add to the film's mix-and-match effect. The puppet characters, with their crude animation, are obviously manipulated by hand and recall folk techniques such as the epic storytelling of the Javanese Wayang Kulit, perhaps the most well established shadow-puppet tradition in the world. (Wayang is a Javanese word meaning "shadow" or "ghost" and is a theatrical performance of living actors, wayang orang; three dimensional puppets, wayang golek; or shadow images projected before a backlit screen, wayang kulit.) The film also conjures

early cinema, with its static presentations, old-timey music, and intertitles. This blend refocuses the entire project on the 19th century elements of content and form that Walker has utilized all along in her reexamination of colonialism and American slavery.

Of course, Walker's is neither the slavery we've learned about in school nor the antebellum world that Hollywood has wrought. Here, a magical realm is presented as both real and metaphor, a semi-history that incriminates all and exonerates none. In the film's version of the middle passage, the slaves, after being thrown overboard, float like rubbish upon ocean waves. An island appears nearby, but as it rises out of the water, what seemed like an oasis is actually the tropical headdress of a giant sea goddess who opens her mouth and swallows the errant black bodies. They float down the long chasm of her digestive tract and

emerge out the other end as fertilizer for the South. In another sequence, a large black buck with a huge protruding phallus meets a smaller man with a smaller phallus and presumed white authority. The master fellates the slave in shadow relief and finally consummates

their shared passion by shoving cotton up his rear end. A midwife in mammy attire eventually arrives, and, though she may know "nuttin' about birthin' no babies," she effectively delivers the offspring of master and slave from the black man's ass: a new breed of black cotton. And so the stories go.

Images such as these have ensnared Walker in controversy and have earned her the disapproval of some notable artists who have preceded her. Betye Saar, an LA-based, elder stateswoman of African-American art, who has been a key innovator of the assemblage tradition, told PBS in 1999 that she felt Walker's work was "sort of revolting and negative, and a form of betrayal to the slaves, particularly women and children;

that it was basically for the amusement and the investment of the white art establishment." Though Saar, who is now 79, has been among the most outspoken critics of Walker, she has not stood alone in making such charges. As in other areas, African-Americans in the art world who have enjoyed any career success have done so after generations of struggle against racist institutions. Those who identify with this effort may question the meteoric swiftness with which Walker, who was born in 1969, has been embraced by these same institutions. In 1997, Walker received a prestigious MacArthur "Genius" Award at the age of 27 and has consistently shown work in major museums and private galleries around the world, including recent projects at the Tate gallery in Liverpool, England, the Studio Museum in Harlem, New York, contemporary art centers in Berlin, Rome, Mexico City, and Tel Aviv,



and for the 25th International Bienal of São Paulo, Brazil, not to mention regular commercial exhibitions at Brent Sikkema Jenkins and Co., the gallery that represents her in New York.

Since her emergence in the late '90s, Walker's work has remained strikingly consistent. Riffing off of a 19th century portrait form, Walker has used black silhouettes on white backgrounds to create an endless array of caricatures whose magical-realist arrangements prod the psycho-sexual wounds of racism. Rather than engaging in some kind of corrective representation that politically realigns these old-fashioned images for the common good, Walker tends to take these fallacious icons even further than any self-respecting minstrel show would, never



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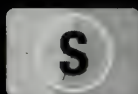
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shying away from the battles that are constantly waged on all sides regarding what can and cannot be said about race in America.

Walker emerged on the art scene at the end of a transformative moment in the late-'90s, when the rarity of pioneers like Saar had given way to a small but healthy crop of African-American artists—folks like Glenn Ligon and Lorna Simpson who had already begun to make names for themselves. The artists of this post-modern mini-movement tended to combine traditional techniques with the stylistic languages of conceptualism and minimalism in order to critique cultural identity. But while Ligon's paintings or Simpson's photographs have often interrogated representation from a position consistent with liberal politics, Walker's work from the start seemed to revel in a wealth of wrong-headed images, images like those that have historically been used to justify racism (again, think minstrel theater or in relevant film terms, *The Birth of a Nation* (1915), *Gone with the Wind* (1939), or Disney's *Song of the South* (1946), an obvious source of inspiration here; REDCAT is an acronym for Roy And Edna Disney/CalArts Theater). The cleverness with which Walker wields these images creates the troubling possibility that white audiences will simply enjoy the work and not understand that it's wrong to be racist. More than critiquing racism itself, Walker seems to be challenging the notion that Western art can indeed be recalibrated to socially redeem itself. This can read as very cynical or very smart.

In a final scene from Walker's film, a little boy demands that Uncle Remus tell him a story else he'll have the old slave whipped. Projected on a screen surrounded by plywood trees that have been painted black, creating a gallery installation that looks like a Brechtian bayou, the film continues this familiar push and pull of representation in which institutions define the starting point for what one can say about oneself. Given the images of tortured African Americans our mass media have recently had occasion to parade across our collective view, Walker's wicked, violent, and un-idealistic work may be more realistic than her critics have given her credit for. ★



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The Anywhere Effect



Jem Cohen's *Chain* stars undirected footage of the real world

BY LISA SELIN DAVIS

A couple of years ago, I decided to take a break from New York, and headed out to Tempe, Arizona for graduate school. I imagined I was moving to a quaint little college town perched along the edge of the Sonoran Desert, dotted with vernacular straw bail houses, maybe, or adobe ranches. What I found instead were traditional suburban subdivisions flanked by ferociously green sod lawns (and millions of gallons of water siphoned from the Colorado River to water them), and endless stretches of highway punctuated with superstores: a Wal-Mart on one corner, Target on the next, the recurring ironic presence of Applebee's (your "neighborhood" bar and grill, available almost exclusively in neighborhood-less zones). Though the Phoenix area was all a



Miho at her desk in *Chain* [photo courtesy Antidote Films]



From *Benjamin Smoke*: outside Benjamin's window on Gaskill Street in Cabbage Town, Atlanta [photo by Michael Ackerman]

big grid and not hard to navigate, I found myself consistently lost, as I could never tell quite where I was. And except for the occasional view of leopard-patterned desert hills, there were no clues that I was even in Arizona. It seemed like I could have been anywhere.

This “anywhere effect” is the subject of Jem Cohen’s newest film, *Chain* (2004). Shot over seven years in enclosed shopping centers and strip malls and hotels in 11 States, plus France, Germany, Poland, Australia, and Canada, *Chain* tells the story of two women—one a squatter, the other a corporate drone—who navigates these generic landscapes, devoid of regional differences, compressed into one homogenized reenactment of a place. One of the actresses, Miho Nikaido, is a professional actor (the corporate drone); the other, Mira Billotte, is an underground musician. And while their journeys are conceived by Cohen, the degree to which the film—a mixture of documentary footage, semi-scripted scenes, and recorded oral histories—is documentary or narrative is known only to him. Expect some recalcitrance if you want him to illuminate the formula.

“I don’t really want to talk too much about the nuts and bolts because I think it spoils the experience to a certain degree,” says Cohen. “What I find most satisfying is that people who go to the movie are unsure as to where the documentary slips off and where the narrative begins.” When Amanda, the drifter, rattles off her low-wage jobs in voice-over, very often, Cohen says, she’s just talking to him about her life. And when Tamiko, who’s been sent to the United States by her Japanese company to consult for a steel company considering a transformation into a theme park, quotes the dogma of her bosses, saying, “Without

a pure race, it will be difficult to have a pure goal for business,” she’s actually quoting a corporate speech Cohen read about in the paper; he studied the business pages, along with books like Walter Benjamin’s *Arcades Project* and Barbara Ehrenreich’s *Nickel and Dimed* for both inspiration and research.

He does offer this about his process: “I usually work kind of backwards, partly from pre-existing footage where I find narrative cues, and then I write very carefully, and so some of it is sort of stumbled upon and some of it is very carefully crafted.” He continues, “I shot for years just looking at these places and not really thinking about their narrative aspects. It’s that process that makes it half a documentary film. Half of it is undirected footage of the real world; it’s documentary footage.”

These real-world corporate spaces—regional malls and parking lots—are as much characters in the film as either of the women, who wander through these worlds without ever interacting. And although many of us navigate these kinds of environments on a regular basis, we may not understand their emotional and social impact. How many of us have experienced the disorientation of disappointment upon entering a new city only to find that it looks just like the place we left? As regionalism disappears, and this corporate architectural conformity raises up to replace it, what does it mean for our culture?

While he’s not going to answer the question of the film’s purpose directly (“The purpose of art is not to direct people toward certain kinds of action,” he says. “That may be one of the side effects of art, but for me it’s not the purpose. That’s the purpose of propaganda.”), Cohen hopes *Chain* will at least get our citizens asking it. Like documentary in its purest sense, Cohen



The mall parking lot in *Chain* [photo courtesy Antidote Films]

presents a situation, a landscape, an experience, with the hope that an audience will develop an environmental awareness and examine how these spaces affect their own lives and their worlds. "A shopping mall in a movie is usually given to you as a kind of shorthand that very crudely, in a sort of cartoonish way, says 'suburbia,' and that kind of shorthand is not working," Cohen says. "It's not encouraging any real connection or contemplation or confrontation with these realities."

Chain's subject matter is increasingly relevant, not just because of the ubiquity of corporate architecture, but because of recent events, like Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, that force our culture to examine how we think about place. "They're talking about is New Orleans going to be a theme park version of itself; are all of the poor people going to get swept away, literally and figuratively, so that there can be a kind of cleaner, safer, tourist-friendly version of this regional extraordinary place?" he asks.

Cohen sees parallels between a society that builds disposable architecture and one that treats its citizens as disposable as well. "These places are so sapped of not just regional character but of historical quality. They're not supposed to age," he says. "When they start to age, they just get rid of them and put up a new one, and you're faced with a world in which things don't age, and what does that do to people when they're surrounded by things that have no evidence of time or decay? Isn't that connected in some way with a society that doesn't want to look at old people in general?"

Cohen has been making films—very much in longhand—for more than 20 years. He began his career as a shipping clerk at a mom-and-pop industrial production company that made 16mm training films for firemen and mothers-to-be. Whatever the subject matter or form, there is a consistency in terms of tone and theme: His films focus on forgotten everyday spaces, overlooked faces on the fringe, and attend to them with a kind

of patience that those of us inculcated by MTV-style rapid cutting might have a hard time adjusting to. His 2000 film *Benjamin Smoke* captured the life of the Atlanta underground musician, druggie, and drag queen known as Benjamin, whose ravaging by AIDS parallels the encroachment of condos and yuppies on his formerly industrial, working class neighborhood of Cabbage Town. The year before, Cohen made *Amber City* (1999), a collage of sorts about an unnamed Italian city, and in 1998, the Fugazi documentary portrait *Instrument*.

To fund his projects, Cohen spent ten years working as a "prop boy" in the commercial film industry, working on "features and bad television," he says. "Working on those kinds of big movies basically just taught me what I didn't want to do: make big movies; spend a lot of money; have armies of people freaking out; not have time to get anything right."

His inspiration came neither from traditional Hollywood films nor from what we've come to see as traditional documentaries. He feels he has more in common with the Lumiere brothers or Robert Flaherty—the father of the dramatic reenactment as much as the father of documentary—than any mainstream filmmakers. "I never had any particular desire to do traditional documentaries or traditional narrative films, and I don't really consider myself an experimental filmmaker, either. If people would describe Hollywood and most indie features as conventional film, or as film where you know how it's going to come out, or star-obsessed film...when they start to be accurate about what they do, then they can start calling what I do experimental," he says. "I don't see why people who don't toe that kind of line should be ghettoized into that little zone of experimental filmmaking."

It's hard to describe Cohen's films without reaching for the word "experimental" though—they defy traditional categorization. Some have called them "essay films," which is less objec-

tionable to him but still not descriptive enough, since they often include narrative elements. “[Experimental is] not a very useful term to me. I think it scares people away, but nobody really knows what it is. It’s about as useful as the word ‘alternative’ in the context of music,” he says. “It has a similar initial meaning, which is now so co-opted and denatured that it doesn’t really mean anything. I think I make accessible films, and that’s not usually what people say about experimental movies.”

And yet he is experimenting. With *Chain*’s long takes, its patient, exhaustive montage of big box stores, and lack of traditional plot—though the characters do change, there is little of that elusive narrative arc—Cohen is convinced he’s made an accessible film. “*Chain* is very down to earth,” he says. “It’s about the mall that you go to and I go to. It’s about the shitty job that you once had or I once had, or many, many other people we know have had or will have, and it’s about the corporate presence in our lives that we’re all finding to be unavoidable. Yet, somehow to make a movie about that, some people will construe it as arty or pretentious or difficult. I think it’s exactly the opposite.”

That American audiences—and more importantly, American media outlets—have not yet realized the accessibility of his films, and particularly *Chain*, is a continual source of annoyance to Cohen. “Why is it theoretically more accessible to make a movie about people trying to kill each other while things explode around them, or life on another planet, or some kind of lifestyle that few of us will ever access?” he asks. “I’m totally puzzled by how things have been warped into that norm of storytelling.”

Certainly there is a connection between the corporatized architectural landscape of *Chain* and the sometimes close-minded world of the film industry; we come to have expectations of what a film—or a building—should look like after being fed the same formula for so long. “That’s what the film is about: It asks certain very simple questions about why we assume that certain things are natural,” says Cohen. “The same way that we assume that Wal-Mart is a natural part of the landscape, people assume that a blockbuster is the natural mode of filmmaking. It’s not the natural mode; it’s a perverse mutation.”

Unfortunately, our cinematic expectations are so ingrained that some in the industry might describe Cohen’s film that way. The problem, Cohen says, is not that audiences reject his genre-bending movies, but that distributors and even festival judges don’t realize their value—how many artists’ projects have been turned down because the backers just don’t know how to market it?

“[Audiences] might be thrown by some ways that the film is made; they might be confused about the film’s gray area between narrative and documentary, but I’m not having problems with the audiences. It’s just a matter of how you can get the movie in front of the audiences,” he says.

Though *Chain* has enjoyed success at many film festivals, in America and abroad, as well as a run at the new IFC Center in New York, Cohen still feels like his mode of filmmaking is not properly appreciated. If the term “experimental” is ill-fitting and misleading, “independent” really does apply to Cohen. His

films are fiercely independent (another title Cohen thinks has been watered down into meaninglessness), though not in the way of Sundance, say—he has love neither for the indie world nor the commercial industry, seeing very little difference between them. Nor do American film festivals appeal to him much, either. He is, as they say, “big in Europe.” That phenomenon is partially explained, Cohen thinks, by the European sensibility to film, a different set of artistic priorities that make room for films like Cohen’s.

“We don’t have anywhere near the quality of festivals that they have in Europe,” he says. When I point out that we have, at least, an ever-increasing quantity of film festivals, he informs me that, “every town having a film festival is not a solution, because a lot of those towns are thinking more in terms of boosting the local economy and trying to attract a couple of stars to walk into their gala opening. It doesn’t necessarily mean that they’re really concerned about filmmaking or independent filmmaking or having



Parking lot view in *Chain* [photo courtesy Antidote Films]

filmmakers talk about real things.” Cohen has little patience for the culture of film festivals or the mystique around independent filmmaking. “It’s about who gets into the party and how big the goody bags are and the media frenzy around sales,” he says. “It’s primarily about whether or not something sells and that’s just not where I come from, and it’s not where I want to end up.”

To be fair, though, even as Cohen lambastes the mainstream, he’s certainly waded in it, making music videos for bands like REM and Sparklehorse—bands that have been lumped into that category, “alternative,” which he so dislikes. But that’s part of his independence; he makes decisions about what projects he wants to take on, unguided by the strong arm of studios, or agents, or marketers. “I want to keep making movies that I have control over, without compromising them,” he says.

Chain is no compromise, even if the documentary elements bend to accommodate the narrative ones, and vice versa. It is, in a way, its own animal, and it is this that pleases Cohen most. “Every time I show it, somebody thinks it’s a straight documentary,” he says. “And that’s just the best review I could ever get.” ★

Docurama on the Rise

The new masters of docs on DVD

BY KATHERINE DYKSTRA

At the 1998 Sundance Film Festival, Steve Savage and Susan Margolin, the two minds behind New Video, a New York-based entertainment marketing and sales company, watched as tickets for documentaries were snatched up left and right. They witnessed audiences line up to get into sold-out theaters. They saw documentary after documentary screen with standing room only. They listened as the critics lauded the documentaries shown at Sundance that year as the best films of the entire bunch. And that's when the light bulb went off.

"We had already been in the video business," says Savage, co-principal of New Video, which he and Margolin founded in 1993 to bring feature films, classic television, and documentaries to home video and DVD. "We hoped this would be the time when documentary filmmaking would become commercial, when filmmakers could make money distributing on DVD and video, and we decided to take the leap."

The leap came in the form of Docurama, a distributing arm created specifically for documentary films both new and old. And though Savage and Margolin couldn't have known for certain then, with documentary filmmaking poised to blow up

and DVD sales getting ready to skyrocket, their leap couldn't have come at a better time. What was a major risk in 1999 was by 2005 a very savvy and successful business venture.

The two tested the waters with DA Pennebaker's *Bob Dylan: Don't Look Back* (1967), the story of the revolutionary and now legendary singer/songwriter's 1965 tour of England. The film had already been released on VHS, but New Video, as Docurama, took a slightly different tack with publicity and promotion. Rather than market it as a music video as other companies had done, Docurama sold it as "one of the greatest documentaries of an artist."

"They missed the point. We focused on this as a film and released it as if it had never been out before. D.A. Pennebaker made himself available for a theatrical kind of release campaign that included a week of wall-to-wall interviews. It got out there.

It was very successful," says Savage. "And we realized we were on to something."

Indeed, the whole concept seems so obvious now—you can't open a film section or visit a theater without running into a documentary. In 2004, Sundance broke tradition and opened with Stacy Peralta's surfing-subculture doc, *Riding Giants*; the first time the festival had ever opened with a documentary. And



festivals created solely for documentaries such as Silverdocs and Full Frame are cropping up all over the country—but in the mid '90s and before, theaters wouldn't run documentaries because tickets wouldn't sell, retailers wouldn't stock them because consumers wouldn't buy, and producers wouldn't fund them because no one could make any money.

"Doug Block [a documentary filmmaker] has a website called the D-word [www.d-word.com], for documentary," says Savage. "Before Docurama, we'd released some documentaries, and we had to be careful not to use the 'D-word' when we went to the retailers because the response was always, 'I don't do well with documentaries.'"

This was status quo for years and then, as it invariably will, popular culture began to shift. The very first tremors of change came from cable TV, according to Pat Aufderheide, a professor in the School of Communication at American University and director of the Center for Social Media there. Looking for low budgets, and high drama and action, cable producers alighted on reality, not the flashy, empty-headed shows of today, but predictable series with staying power. Think TLC's "Junkyard Wars," a four-year series that began in 2000, which featured teams racing to build a machine out of

materials they found in a scrap yard in each episode. And the Food Network's still-running "Food Fight," where two teams face off to see who can concoct the best dish out of a given regional fare. This formulation of documentary, devoid as it is of personality, created an appetite for genuine documentary, explains Aufderheide. Suddenly people were seeking out docs with unique viewpoints, with authentic personas.

Aufderheide calls it a backlash of commoditized popular culture, citing the success of ranting radio hosts, the increase in religious fervor, and the growth in cynicism for popular media as evidence of America's hunger for something real, something in-your-face, something that's not ashamed to be exactly what it is.

Simultaneously, with the help of the internet, niche markets developed, spawning even more documentary consumption. "For example, my kid was wearing a Che Guevara t-shirt," says Aufderheide. "I asked him if he knew who Che Guevara was, and he went off to Netflix to rent a doc. He found an Italian one on Che and now he's altered our Netflix recommendations list. It's an accidental niche."

Savage believes the coming of age of the doc had a lot to do with the growing presence of mass media. "I think a lot of

people have been talking about how we're all in this world together. Things we could have ignored years ago, we can't now, because all of our media brings it into our homes, into our lives," says Savage. "People need to make sense of this world." And so they turn to "the truth."

Meanwhile, documentary filmmakers were learning that they could make docs more palatable by perhaps taking a cue from narrative nonfiction, in which writers use literary devices to make fact read like fiction. Their films became less like hour-long news programs and more like dramatic features.

Savage keyed into all of this long before it happened. "Another indicator that [Docurama] might work was the emergence of nonfiction [books] over fiction in the '90s," says Savage. "This supported our belief that this would happen in motion media as well." He was right.

Eventually the theatrical marketplace, taking a cue from public taste, developed a craving for films that reflect realism. And by 2003, there was no shortage of successful docs nonfiction filmmakers could look to for inspiration and measure their own success against. In fact, the box office returns for theatrical documentaries increased four-fold between 2000 and 2002. Leaping from \$5 million in 2000 and 2001, to \$32 million in 2002, and nearly \$45 million in 2003 (dubbed "the year of the doc" by mainstream media such as the *Boston Phoenix* and the *Austin Chronicle*). And the numbers are still growing. Unit sales for documentaries on DVD have tripled between 2001 and 2004 from 1 million to 3.7 million (projected).

Clearly, Savage and Margolin made their move at the right time.

"We like to think we're really smart, but we were a bit lucky at the end of the day that there was a steady stream of great docs over the last 5 years that have brought more people toward these kinds of films," says Savage.

That first year Docurama released six titles. Five years later, in 2004, the 40-person strong company released 36 new titles. In fact, Docurama is one of the 10 biggest DVD suppliers to Amazon, says Savage.

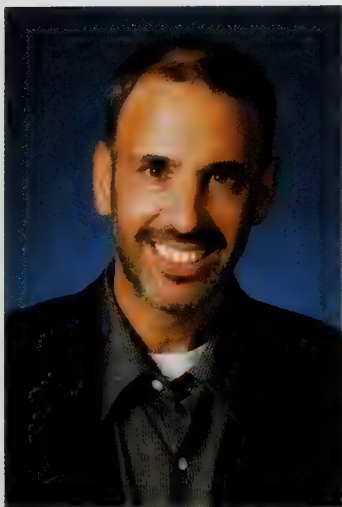
But just because the documentary film world was booming didn't necessarily mean that Docurama was ensured success; there are now a whole slew of labels that put out docs. No, the secret to Docurama's success is in their approach. Savage puts it nicely: "Every documentary film doesn't sell everywhere, but every documentary film sells somewhere." He continues, "You can't just pump titles out to the most obvious and logical retail outlets, you have to understand each title and its own customers and strategy. Documentaries are usually about a subject and each subject has its people who are interested in it, so rather than sell documentaries to documentary lovers, we sell a film to the people who care about it and hopefully in turn bring them into the documentary lovers tent."

Take *Sound and Fury*, Josh Aronson's 2000 documentary that examines deaf culture. The film debuted at Sundance and later aired on PBS's P.O.V. In order to market the film, Docurama first considered who would actually want to see it. And then they targeted websites dedicated to deaf culture, schools for the deaf, blogs that deaf people frequent, as well as special interest groups and other deaf communities.

"There was broad awareness for the film, and Docurama took advantage of that," says Aronson, who estimates that between 1 and 2 million people nationwide are touched by deafness. "Through that celebrity and our awards, Docurama was able to focus the distribution."

Emboldened by the success of his first teaming with Docurama, Aronson is currently toying with another way to package the film: with its sequel, a follow-up he hopes to make about the families featured in *Sound and Fury*. A sterling idea as repackaging can mean the revitalization of a documentary.

Twenty years ago, Aviva Kempner produced *Partisans of Vilna*, the story of the Jewish resistance in the capital of Lithuania during WWII and the Holocaust. When it was released in 1986, the film, co-written and directed by Josh Waletzky (*Image Before My Eyes*; 1981), received critical acclaim: It won awards, screened at film festivals around the world, and was used educationally in classrooms. But as time wore on, viewership waned. Sure, synagogues still showed it as



“We like to think we’re really smart, but we were a bit lucky at the end of the day that there was a steady stream of great docs over the last 5 years that have brought more people toward these kinds of films,” says Savage.

the classic film on Jewish resistance, but its heyday had past.

Enter Docurama. Kempner who directed *The Life and Times of Hank Greenberg* (1998), pitched *Partisans* to her old friend Susan Margolin at a party, and Margolin bit. Docurama reissued *Partisans* in 2004-ready style. Read: a hipper package. Completely repackaged, the DVD included a bonus CD of the Grammy-nominated soundtrack featuring Jewish resistance songs and a songbook complete with lyrics in both English and Yiddish. A study guide with historical background and key questions for discussion, footage of Kempner and Waletzky ruminating on their film, and a photo gallery of stills not included in the original.

“DVDs give you such an incredible opportunity to reintroduce your product. New technology is a resurrection,” says Kempner. “For so long people would come up to me and say, ‘I just saw your Hank Greenberg film.’ Now they come up to me and say, ‘I just saw your Hank Greenberg film and your *Partisans* film.’”

Docurama gave the film a new life. Similarly, for films unable to summon enough initial attention, DVDs can mean they’ll have a future.

After its premiere at Sundance, *Sister Helen*, Rebecca Cammisa and Rob Fruchtmann’s award-winning 2002 documentary about a tough-as-nails nun who runs a home for recovering addicts, was presented on Cinemax. Despite the awards and short theatrical runs in New York and LA, Cammisa and Fruchtmann were unable to secure a theatrical distributor. Cammisa believes that *Helen*’s time on television ultimately hurt the film’s chances for a distributor.

“Once a film shows on TV, theatrical distributors are less interested,” she says. “[And] once theatrical was gone, what was there for us but home video or educational distribution? But then Docurama wanted it and suddenly there was another means of distributing our film.”

The film’s re-release was a boon for *Sister Helen*. “I did a screening of it recently and afterward people are asking me, ‘Where can I get the DVD?’ Now I have somewhere to point them,” says Cammisa, who was especially pleased with

Docurama’s willingness to work with her on DVD authoring, which includes designing the menu, the case, and any extra scenes.

“Other documentary filmmakers I’ve spoken with that have had DVDs made by other distributors, high-end distributors, have had huge complaints because those distributors didn’t allow them any control when it came to authoring,” Cammisa says. “Our experience was great—the photo, the cover, the design. [Docurama] allowed us to look and comment and then suggest changes, and they listened to us. It’s so important that your distributor isn’t just slapping a film on DVD, and then it’s out in the world.”

Docurama’s successful collaborations with filmmakers are both a point of pride and a source of satisfaction. “We like working directly with the filmmakers because they know their audiences better than we do,” says Savage.

Since the light bulb went off in Salt Lake City, Docurama has released more than 100 documentary titles, including *The Brandon Teena Story* (1998), *Southern Comfort* (2001), and *Porn Star: The Legend of Ron Jeremy* (2001). The company also boasts a slew of partnerships that have brought great and important films to DVD—with Independent Film Channel (*Lost In La Mancha*, *A Decade Under the Influence*), with P.O.V., PBS’s documentary series, (*Lost Boys of Sudan*, *Farmingville*), and with the Sundance Channel (to launch the Sundance Channel Home Entertainment Documentary Collection). For its part, New Video keeps plugging along as the exclusive label and distributor for the A&E Home Video lines, and The History Channel. And although what the company has achieved is clearly remarkable, Savage concedes that there are still strides to be made, primarily in trying to convince bricks-and-mortar video stores to increase their documentary shelf-space.

“Our work is not done,” says Savage. “There are still a lot of stores where you won’t see a documentary section. We have not arrived, this is a work in progress.” ★

Coming Out

Jennifer Fox encourages her subjects to let it all hang out

By Holly Willis

On a hot and sticky afternoon last summer, New York-based filmmaker Jennifer Fox climbed the stairs to the stage in a darkened auditorium on the Wells College campus in Aurora, New York, home to the Creative Capital artists' retreat. Each of this year's Creative Capital grantees had a mere 10 minutes to dazzle their colleagues and an assortment of advisors; the "right" presentation seamlessly merged a little background info, a quick sketch of the project, and a film clip showcasing the artist's talents. Fox, however, wanted her film to speak for itself. Cueing the projectionist, she stood back and waited. And waited. Nothing happened. Caught off guard, Fox abandoned her plan. She began to speak.

"I'm interested in presence," she said quietly, and within seconds, she was completely absorbed in describing her desire to capture the ineffable experience of screen magic, when a documentary subject becomes truly present in front of the camera.

Conjuring this kind of presence is one of the central ambitions of Fox's practice as a filmmaker, and as she spoke with hushed intensity, it was clear that Fox's camera could match forces with any person facing its lens. Fox, who has been making award-winning films for more than a decade, focuses on her subjects with singular conviction over long periods of time and with a commitment to create some sort of transformation, both onscreen and in the world.

Fox studied creative writing and journalism at Johns Hopkins University, and



Top: Filmmaker Jennifer Fox (on left with camera) photographing a participant in her latest documentary, *Flying: Confessions of a Free Woman* [photo by Jennifer Fox]; bottom: portrait of Jennifer Fox [photo by Lawrence Ivy]

later studied filmmaking at New York University, but left in 1981 to make her first feature film, *Beirut: The Last Home Movie* (1987)—a chronicle of a family's struggle to exist in Lebanon during wartime. She says that it took her a little while to find filmmaking. "I asked myself, 'What could sustain my life?'" she recalls. "It had to be something I couldn't achieve. It may sound arrogant, but I thought of journalism as something I could master. Whether I would be good at it or not is another issue. But film? Film seemed un-masterable."

While she was at NYU, a classmate disappeared for several months and then reappeared telling horrors of life in Beirut. Fox was captivated. "I heard her story and literally said, 'I want to make a film about your family,' and was in Beirut six weeks later," she says.

What interested her was life lived in extreme circumstances, and although she had never made a feature film, she quickly found a way to organize the project. "The key for me was my friend's older sister—before we started filming she said that destruction is more beautiful than construction, that going down has more emotion than going up. I felt that she could speak the heart of the story." Fox shot for three and a half months and then spent the next six years trying to put the film together. "I had no idea how to make a film," she says. "We constructed it three times, following different threads. I just didn't know how to tell a story, but either I was going to die or I was going to make that film."

She did indeed make the film, and it

was subsequently broadcast in 20 countries and won a long list of awards, including Best Documentary and Best Cinematography at the Sundance Film Festival in 1988.

While *Beirut* explores what Fox calls the seduction of living at the extremes, her 10-hour PBS series *An American Love Story* (1998) examines the stress of living every day. The film, which was shot over the course of 16 months in the late '90s, profiles the interracial household of Karen Wilson, Bill Sims, and their two daughters. Fox says that she was in an interracial relationship herself and made the film in order to find out how people negotiated the social and familial challenges that arise when a white woman and a black man share their lives. "First and foremost my films are real journeys for me," explains Fox. She adds that she never intended to film for as long as she did, but got caught up in the patterns and rhythms of the Wilson-Sims household and what was revealed there. "I didn't want to be there just for the high moments," she explains. "I wanted to see people over time, to see how race and love and family happen over time."

Love Story combines observational footage with voiceover fragments spoken by all four family members in a complex mesh of points of view. "We typically don't reveal our emotions when we go through our day—when we wash the dishes, for example," says Fox. "The drama in those episodes is so small. So the layer constructed in voiceover was created in order to add in thoughts, to give the film a whole other narrative

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Jennifer Fox travels in Calcutta, India to visit the family of a community organizer during production of *Flying: Confessions of a Free Woman* [courtesy of Fox]

dimension." She liked the conflicts that were articulated in the voiceovers. "And I love interviewing—working through conversations where you and the subject are both surprised, where you both get to a place where there is a real moment."

Fox's latest project is *Women & I*, an expansive and intense documentary investigation of the sexual lives of women around the world. Once again, Fox started with a question from her own life: "I couldn't find an image of myself," she says, explaining that being a woman without a husband or children made her feel invisible. "I couldn't see myself so I had to make a film and say, 'See? There you are.'"

Fox gave herself several rules for making the film. "First, the camera had to be passed and everyone in the room had to be on camera." This rule is at the core of Fox's attempt to elicit real presence. "It creates this enormous intimacy onscreen," she says. "And my goal as a filmmaker has always been this—getting screen presence. When you see a great performance, it sparkles. But in documentary filmmaking we don't demand that because we're asking people to report on their lives rather than be present. What I want is for the camera to witness someone being alive. But the camera stops that process, because people become self-conscious. In passing the

camera, other people get to be observers, and suddenly the camera is not an observer but a participant. It really affects the quality of the conversation and the scenes."

The second rule was that there was to be no sound person. "The reason I didn't bring a sound person is for the intimacy. If I had brought another person, I'd be more comfortable than the people I spoke with. But I didn't want to be comfortable. I wanted to need to make friends. The film is all about those friendships. If I had had someone traveling with me, I would have been much more secure, but I would have been a worse subject. And the subjects in front of me would have been less open."

Fox, who used a tiny Sony PDX10 camera, says that shooting the film alone was challenging. "It was difficult finding an aesthetic that didn't get in the way of my spontaneity," she says. "One of the principles of the project was not to be precious with videotape. As soon as you become precious, you start to control things, to make pretty shots. And if I did that I couldn't be myself. It's taken a while to find a balance between aesthetics and lightness."

Fox also worked on the way she approached her subjects, who were a mix of friends and strangers dispersed across 17 countries. "I am a naïve person, really,

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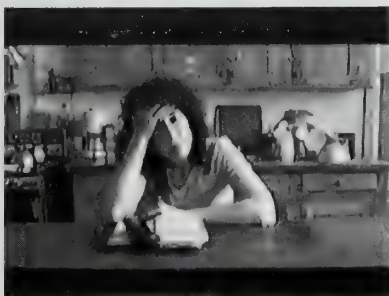
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and I'm truly curious about other people, so I've used being open as a strategy to have other people be open. But in some cultures, being open isn't always positive. In Pakistan or Cambodia, for example, sharing may be seen as crossing boundaries. And as is always the case, talking about sexuality can either open doors or close doors. In Pakistan, with some women, my openness made them open, but in other cases, I appeared to be a crass Westerner. It's less culturally defined than personally defined, though. One of the premises of the film is that we're more alike than we think."

Fox discovered that not only are women across the world alike in many ways, but their lives aren't really being shown. "Whether we're single or married, we're living much more sexual, much more complicated lives than the stories



Fox's *Women & I* investigates female identity across countries [courtesy Creative Capital]

would allow you to believe," says Fox, "and we need to come out."

For Fox, "coming out" can be facilitated by the sharing of the camera. "A camera can often be used to take away presence," she says. "But when you bring presence, people feel more alive, more aware. There are surprises, people learn things, and sometimes a camera catches something real, like when you say something that you've never said before. Then a person feels an ah-ha, and that process of learning about yourself is incredibly valuable."

These camera-inspired revelations constitute the core of a filmmaking practice aimed at nothing less than transformation. Says Fox: "I want to be living when I make films. I don't want to just be making them. I want to be transformed by the stories I'm filming." ★



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A scrapbook of photos from *A Highway Robbery* [courtesy of Rusty Nails]

Shooting a *Robbery*

He didn't set out to make a documentary...

By Rusty Nails

There are a few things in life that that we all need, but that many people take for granted—things like food, safety, heat, and a home. Watching a blind veteran fight to keep a superhighway from running through property he'd owned for 30 years is a gut wrenching sight. As the Bush Administration closes its fist on the rights of American citizens, consumer brand video cameras may be one of the last potential sources to record what is going on in our communities. This is the story of how a blind man and his family fought to save their land and home.

To be honest, I never really thought of

making a documentary—never felt the urge or artistic need. For me, fiction films were the thing. I wanted to create new landscapes, the kind that existed in my mind, hoping to find an audience for my fledgling cinematic offspring. But in the summer of 2000, I was a freelance videographer for a dot.com called Supersphere. The site was great—its content dealt with underground-alternative-independent music, films, and fanzines, and also included a left-bent political section that covered basic human rights and political issues. One of my first jobs for Supersphere was to grab a camera and go to Rockford, Illinois, an hour and half

drive from Chicago, to tape a group of people protesting the “quick-take” (a faster version of eminent domain) of a blind veteran cowboy's land.

We arrived at Tom Ditzler's property late in the evening and slept in my friend Jay's van. Early the next morning, we filmed protesters putting mud on trees to dissuade the landscapers from cutting them down. Throughout the day I got to speak with Tom and his wife, Jan Ditzler, a number of times and was quickly drawn to their warm and inviting personalities. Tom, a handsome 65-year-old gentleman, lost his sight at 18 years old when he was serving in the army and a recon-



Tom Ditzler [courtesy Rusty Nails]

naissance flare went off prematurely. He and his wife bought the 17-acre farm in question to raise horses, and to maintain a place with which Tom could be familiar enough to navigate by himself. The Ditzlers treasured the land—as many had long before them—which hosts wetlands, Native American burial grounds, and an endless trail of artifacts.

How could the government seize these people's land to build an unnecessary road that would cost the taxpayers 17 million dollars—especially since there was an alternate route an eighth of a mile away that would only cost \$3 million dollars to construct?

After I finished shooting the footage for Supersphere, I kept going back to Rockford to videotape and help save the Ditzler's land by alerting people to their situation—this time borrowing a Sony TRV-900, a microphone, and a tripod from my job. With no car, I found myself convincing friends to drive to Rockford with me, which proved an important way

to get people involved while keeping my costs ridiculously cheap. All I needed was gas and miniDV tapes. Each new person I brought loved the Ditzlers and did what they could to help. My friend Esther tried to get them on the Oprah Winfrey Show to raise awareness about their situation... it didn't happen. When I couldn't round up a willing party, I took the camera and tripod on the bus which cost \$26 round trip.

Before long, I realized I was making a feature documentary. In the beginning I wasn't completely sure of what to do—I taped anything that seemed important—the Ditzlers in their daily routines as well as fighting the courts. It soon became clear which events or personal moments might be important to the story.

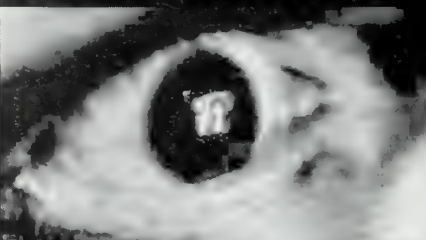
When I first started taping, I didn't really know how to use the camera, but within a couple of weeks I became competent enough to shoot while simultaneously asking questions, although I didn't really want to do both. I enlisted the help of my friend Jonathan who had free access to a Canon XL-1. Comparatively, I liked the portability, sound capabilities, and low light possibilities of the Sony TRV 900, but the Canon had a crisper image when shooting with a lighting set up. I liked both cameras for different reasons. I didn't own any lighting equipment so I used lamps and household lights. Later we borrowed a couple \$40-floodlights a friend had bought from a hardware store for additional lighting.

Bringing a cameraperson with me made things easier as far as interviewing my subjects. I felt more comfortable not having to set up a shot, ask questions, and keep the camera steady during handheld situations. But there were also moments when I preferred to have the camera in hand—it gave me a sense of urgency and empowerment, and the courage to ask tough questions to irritated or aggressive subjects. I tried to stay away from television style close-ups. Nothing says TV documentary to me like an endless series of talking-head interviews. We began editing in 2001 and I continued shooting, when necessary, for the next four years.

Editing the piece has been the hardest part of the process. My first editor didn't

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A 7-minute personal doc called *The Ramones and I* [Rusty Nails]

have the time to give the project the care it needed, and so he recruited our friend Chuck. Chuck didn't have much editing experience. This, combined with my lack of a solid story direction, led to two years of chaos. We had 42 hours of footage to trudge through and neither of us knew how to turn it into a solid piece. Chuck got a number of editing jobs and proved to be a quick learner, which needless to say, was crucial to the project.

Editing a traditional narrative fiction film is one thing; putting together a documentary dealing with complex issues, legal problems, a family's personal life, and their public battle with a corrupt local government is entirely different. Our first rough cut was 2 hours and 30 minutes, and still didn't clearly convey the story. We screened this version for six friends—they barely knew what to say; the documentary was a rambling mess. It was important for us to hear this and we gathered their comments ("We want to see the family more." "We don't know enough what a quick take is." "Was Tom always blind?") and discussed which problems we needed to address. It was important for us to take the criticism in a clinical way; the documentary was our patient and we wanted it to be healthy enough to thrive amid the general public.

As we continued the editing process, we realized there was very little coverage of Kris Cohn, the county board chairperson responsible for setting the road construction into motion. Kris refused to give us an interview, but I was able to gain access at a local television station and obtained crucial footage of the Ditzlers, Kris Cohn, and aerial shots of the property free of charge.

In the last year we went from a 160-minute cut to the 88-minute version we are currently working with. We found that we had been needlessly reiterating a number of ideas in the film, and decided that less can be more. We've continued to show the film in rough to final cut form, to friends, filmmaking peers, and even a recent festival audience, continuing our quest for the best cut possible.

The budget for *Highway Robbery*, five years in the making, is about \$2,250. This included mini-DV tapes, external hard drives for the computer, gas and food. And in the time since I first started shooting the film, I made a 7-minute personal doc called *The Ramones and I*, and have also begun work on another feature documentary about George A. Romero, called *Dead On: The Life and Cinema of George A. Romero*. Maybe there is a bit of a documentary filmmaker in me after all. ★

The Many Meanings of “Fair Use”

How and when to get permission, even when it seems unnecessary

By Fernando Ramirez, Esq.

So your documentary has commercial interest and high revenue earning potential. And you've secured all of the agreements, releases, and licenses for the film, except for one piece of vintage footage that's not quite in the public domain (material which can be used freely by anyone because it was created before 1923), but it's "pretty old." Then there's that one famous singer who supports charitable causes like the one covered in your documentary, but whom you couldn't get to "donate" her music, so instead you hire her former back-up singer to impersonate her voice. You think to yourself, "This is all 'fair use,' so I don't really need a release or a license—my documentary is clearly historical and educational," despite the fact that a major programmer or distributor is interested.

Although under some circumstances "fair use" allows you to use copyrighted work without the consent of the copyright owner (i.e., for reporting the news or educational use such as photocopies for the classroom), the rule should never be relied upon as a means for using someone else's work without permission. Fair use is not a substitute for proper clearance. It's a defense to a lawsuit for copyright infringement. Which means that by the time

you've invoked fair use, you're probably in the middle of a costly lawsuit.

Take for example *The Definitive Elvis*, a 16-hour video documentary about the life of Elvis Presley. The project was a \$2 million venture. At one point it was available for purchase for \$99 retail. But now you can't rent or buy it anywhere. And that's because the filmmakers used copyrighted material, including footage of Elvis on "The Ed Sullivan Show." Instead of paying for various licenses (i.e., paying the owners of the footage \$10,000 per minute of footage), Passport Entertainment, the producers/distributors, relied on fair use. Big mistake. The court said no to their fair use argument, and stopped distribution and sale of the documentary. It seems that although a documentary about the King has "biographical," "newsworthy," and "historical" value, the clips usage was actually "commercial," in part because the documentary was never advertised as a "scholarly critique" or "historical analysis." The court viewed the use more as an attempt to profit from the "entertainment value" of the clips without paying a licensing fee to the copyright owners.

There have been other cases involving fair use, including TNT and the Muhammad Ali film *When We Were Kings* (1996), Universal Picture's *Twelve Monkeys* (1995), and New Line Cinema's film *Seven* (1995). Some were ruled in favor of fair use, but the majority were not, and although most of these cases have not involved documentaries, the rules are for the most part applicable to them as well, especially in light of the genre's increasing commercial appeal. Until the fair use law is changed to favor documentaries by a clear Supreme Court decision or federal legislation, filmmakers should err on the side of caution and always secure releases and licenses.

There are various types of releases and licenses a documentary filmmaker will use or be asked to sign during production. Releases are necessary to avoid claims of Right of Privacy (unconsented use or dissemination of information about an individual's private life) and Right of Publicity (the right of an individual to control the commercial use of

his or her identity, name, voice, or likeness). Personal releases and location releases are generally needed to film individuals and places.

Personal Releases are necessary to secure permission to record and to exploit an individual's appearance in a documentary, unless the individual is unrecognizable (i.e., part of a crowd of faceless people). A typical release should include:

- * the specific rights being granted by the individual (i.e., the right to reproduce, copy, and modify the individual's name, pseudonym, image, likeness, voice in any media);

- * duration and scope (i.e., unrestricted absolute, perpetual, worldwide rights);

- * a waiver of rights to safeguard against future claims and lawsuits of defamation, invasion of privacy, and right of publicity;

- * the filmmaker's full and sole ownership of the footage;

- * the filmmaker's discretion to transfer the rights without any encumbrances;

- * warranty that the individual is over the age of 18 or parental/guardianship consent if the individual is a minor.

Location Agreements are used any time a documentary filmmaker shoots a scene in property that doesn't belong to the filmmaker. It could be a home, apartment, gym, school, or grocery store. In addition to some of the points discussed in the Personal Release, the filmmaker should include and remember the following:

- * the specific address of the location;

- * duration of shoot with date and time, including provisions in case of unexpected delays;

- * consent, if needed, to move furniture, fixtures, displays, etc.;

- * the money paid, if any, for use of the space;

- * if the location is a public area, to research local permitting requirements;

- * never presume that a Location Release allows the right to shoot copyrighted material in the background such as artwork, advertisements, etc.

In addition to securing proper releases, the following are some pointers document-

RACE IS THE PLACE

by Raymond Telles and Rick Tejada-Flores



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tary filmmakers should bear in mind:

- * Never presume that "acknowledging" or giving "credit" is good enough.

- * Review footage carefully to spot all people and objects incorporated in the film.

- * Unless you can secure a release or license, make sure that radios or music devices are not playing in the background.

- * Turn those televisions off unless you plan on "patching" the image. This applies to scenes where unlicensed material such as photos and paintings are visible even if you think they are not in perfect focus or are obscured.

- * Do not use "sound-alikes" in lieu of permission. For example, although not a documentary, it didn't work for the Ford Motor Company and their advertising agency when they used a Bette Midler sound-alike to imitate her voice for a commercial. The court found that it was a violation of her right of publicity to impersonate her distinctive voice.

- * When in doubt, cut it out.

Much has been said about Robert Greenwald's documentary *Outfoxed: Rupert Murdoch's War on Journalism* (2004). Yes, Greenwald used clips, owned by Fox News, to critique what he believed was the network's bias toward the Right, and Fox didn't sue him. But had they been, Greenwald had a well-known legal scholar and a law firm prepared to defend him. Most documentary filmmakers, even those with projects that fit squarely within a scholarly critique or historical analysis, can't afford the luxury of keeping a legal scholar and a qualified litigator on retainer.

Getting permission by way of properly drafted releases and licenses is the way to go. It can raise a production budget, but failure to do so could result in costly litigation including damages or a court order stopping the distribution or exhibition of your documentary. Note that in the Elvis Presley example, the documentary filmmakers' claim that thousands of units had been shipped to retail outlets and distributors was not enough to discourage the court from rejecting their fair use arguments, and stopping the distribution and further sale of the documentary. ★

FESTIVALS

Listings do not constitute an endorsement. We recommend that you contact the festival directly before sending cassettes, as details may change after the magazine goes to press. Deadline 1st of the month two months prior to cover date (e.g., Sept. 1st for Nov. issue). Include festival dates, categories, prizes, entry fees, deadlines, formats & contact info. Send to: festivals@avf.org.

ASHLAND INDEPENDENT FILM FESTIVAL, April 6-10, OR. Deadline: Nov. 18; Dec. 9 (final); Dec. 16 (w/outabox extended). The Ashland Independent Film Festival is an "intense," five day event that actively promotes dialogue between filmmaker & audience in an intimate setting. Cats: feature, doc, student, short, animation, experimental, children. Awards: Juried and Audience awards. . Formats: 35mm, Beta SP, DVD. Preview on VHS or DVD. Entry Fee: \$30-\$60; w/outabox/student entries \$5 discount; Southern Oregon residents no fee. Contact: Festival; (541) 488-3823; fax: 488-7782; info@ashlandfilm.org; www.ashlandfilm.org.

ATHENS INT'L FILM & VIDEO FESTIVAL, April 28-May 4, OH. Deadline: Jan. 30 . Annual fest celebrating independent, documentary & experimental works. Each entry is pre-screened by a committee of artists. Works w/ high regard for artistic innovation, sensitivity to content & personal involvement w/ the medium are welcomed. Cats: feature, doc, short, experimental, animation. Awards: Cash awards. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, 1/2", Beta, Beta SP, mini-DV. Preview on VHS (NTSC) or DVD. Entry Fee: \$35, plus s.a.s.e./insurance. Contact: Ruth Bradley; (740) 593-1330; fax: 597-2560; bradley@ohiou.edu; www.athensfest.org.

BARE BONES INT'L INDEPENDENT FILM FESTIVAL, April 17-13, OK. Deadline: Nov. 1; Dec. 31; Jan.26 (final). Projects budgeted for less than a million dollars are eligible to enter the fest. Seven days of screenings, workshops, screenplay readings, location tour, youth film projects. Cats: feature, doc, short, animation, experimental, script, music video, student, youth media. Awards: Auteur of the Year; Audience Choice Award; Grand Jury Awards. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, Most Video formats. Entry Fee: \$20-\$50. Contact: Shiron Butterfly Ray; (918) 616-1335; barebonesfilmfestival@yahoo.com; www.barebonesfilmfestival.com.

DANCE CAMERA WEST, Month of June, CA. Deadline: Dec. 17; Jan. 21 (final). Looking for works that reflect "a hybridized genre that merges both performance & cinematic aesthetics, w/ an emphasis on choreography made for the screen." Cats: feature, doc, experimental, any style or genre, installation. Formats: Beta SP, VHS or DVD. Entry Fee: \$20-40. Contact: Festival; (213) 480-8633; lkessler@dancecamerawest.org; dancecamerawest.org.

DANCES W/ FILMS, July 21-27, CA. Deadline: early: Jan 2nd; standard: Apr. 24; Late: May

29. All films admitted for screening are selected using only one major criterion: they must have been completed w/out any known director, actors, producers, or monies from known sources (e.g., known production companies). Films must have been completed by Jan. 1 of previous year. Founded: 1998. Cats: family, youth media, feature, doc, short, animation, experimental. Formats: Beta SP, 16mm, 35mm, DV, HD. Preview on VHS. Entry Fee: Entry Fee: early deadline 50 feature/35 short; standard deadline 60 feature/40 short; late deadline 75 both. Contact: Leslee Scallon; (323) 850-2929; fax: 850-2928; info@danceswfilms.com; www.DancesWithFilms.com.

DC INDEPENDENT FILM FESTIVAL & MARKET, March 2-12, DC. Deadline: Nov. 15; Dec. 15 (final). Fest also incl. seminars, a film market, a trade show which offers an opportunity for industry companies to showcase their services & latest technological advances plus network in the country's third most important production community. Founded: 1999. Cats: feature, short, animation, doc. Awards: \$50,000 in cash & prizes. Formats: 35mm, Beta SP, 1/2", DVD. preview on VHS (NTSC). Entry Fee: \$15 shorts (up to 30 min.); \$25 features. Contact: c/o DC Independent Film Festival;

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DELRAY BEACH FILM FESTIVAL, March 8-12, FL. Deadline: early: Oct 7; Regular: Nov. 4; Late: Dec. 16. More than just a film fest, this event offers filmmakers a fun, warm, beautiful place to meet, mingle & party. The relaxed & welcoming atmosphere will be a breath of fresh air to any filmmaker who has been busy producing or promoting their film. Entry Fee: \$5-35. Contact: Michael Posner; (561) 213-5737; mike@delraybeachfilmfestival.com; www.delraybeachfilmfestival.com.

FILM FLEADH: THE IRISH FILM FESTIVAL, March TBA, NY. Deadline: Dec. 30. An annual fest open to films made in Ireland, or by an Irish filmmaker, or by a filmmaker of Irish descent living outside Ireland, or w/ an Irish actor in the lead. Cats: feature, doc, short, animation, Live Action. Awards: Cash awards (Kodak) to best feature & short. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, DV, Beta, DigiBeta, DVD. Preview on VHS. Entry Fee: \$25. Contact: Terence Mulligan, Fest Dir.; (212) 414-2688; fax: (212) 675-5822; the411@thecraicfest.com; www.thecraicfest.com.

FIRSTGLANCE: PHILADELPHIA FILM FESTIVAL, June 1-4, PA. Deadline: Jan. 1; Jan. 15 (final). Fest encourages student & professional film & videomakers at all levels for underground alternative event whose mission is to exhibit all genres of work, from mainstream to controversial, in a competitive, casual atmosphere. Winners will also screen in Hollywood. Founded: 1996. Cats: animation, experimental, student, feature, doc, short, any style or genre, TV. Awards: Over \$50,000 in prizes. Formats: 16mm, all digital formats, 35mm. Preview on VHS (NTSC) & DVD. Entry Fee: \$30-\$60. Contact: Firstglance Films; (818) 464-3544; (215) 552-8566; wropro1@msn.com; www.firstglancefilms.com.

FULL FRAME DOC FILM FESTIVAL, April 6-9, NC. Deadline: Oct. 15, Nov. 15, Dec. 15 (final). Films cannot be longer than 180 min.. Cats: doc. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, Beta SP, DigiBeta. preview on VHS/DVD. Entry Fee: \$35; \$45; \$55 (final). Contact: Phoebe Brush; (919) 687-4100; fax: 687-

4200; phoebe@fullframefest.org; www.fullframefest.org.

GEORGE FOSTER PEABODY AWARDS, June 5th, GA. Deadline: Jan. 17. Awards recognize "distinguished achievement & meritorious public service" by domestic & int'l radio, internet & TV nets, stations, producing orgs, cableTV orgs & individuals. All program entries must be for programs broadcast, cablecast or released for nonbroadcast distribution during calendar yr. preceding jurying process. Founded: 1940. Cats: TV. Awards: Statuette. Award. Cats: News; Entertainment; Programs for Children; Education; Doc; Public Service; & Individuals, Institutions or Organizations. Formats: 1/2", Beta SP, CD-ROM, DVD, Web. Entry Fee: \$150 (radio), \$250 (television, internet). Contact: Horace Newcomb; (706) 542-3787; fax: 542-9273; Peabody@arches.uga.edu; www.peabody.uga.edu

HI MOM! FILM FESTIVAL, June 9-10, NC. Deadline: Jan. 1 (early); Mar. 1 (final). Festival is accepting short shorts & not-so-short shorts w/ deep thoughts & shallow pockets. Awards: Cash & non-cash prizes awarded. Formats: DVD, Beta SP, Hi8, CD-ROM, super 8, 35mm, 16mm, 1/2", Mini-DV. Preview on VHS (PAL or NTSC). Entry Fee: None (early); \$15 (final). Contact: Matt Hedt; (919) 967-4338; himomfilmfest@mindspring.com; www.himomfilmfestival.org.

HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH INT'L FILM FESTIVAL, New York, TBA, NY. Deadline: Dec. 20. Fest takes place at the Walter Reade Theater at Lincoln Center & is co-presented by the Film Society of Lincoln Center. Fest was created to advance public education on human rights issues & concerns. Highlights from the fest are presented in a growing number of cities around the world. Cats: feature, doc, short, any style or genre. Awards: Nestor Almendros Award for \$5,000.. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, 3/4", Beta SP, DigiBeta, DV. Preview on VHS (preview tapes are not returned, they are recycled) or DVD. Entry Fee: No entry fee. Contact: John Anderson; (212) 216-1263; fax: 736-1300; andersj@hrw.org; www.hrw.org/iff.

HUMBOLDT INT'L SHORT FILM FESTIVAL, April

1-8, CA. Deadline: Jan. 27; Feb. 17 (final). The 39th Humboldt Int'l Short Film Festival is the oldest continuous student-run fest in the world. Whether you are a first time filmmaker in the process of developing your unique visual style, or an established independent continuing to push the limits of the mediums, the Festival invites you to submit your 16mm film or digital vido. Films must be under 45 min. in length & completed in the last three years. Founded: 1967. Cats: narrative, experimental, animation, doc, & the "you call it" category, short, any style or genre. Awards: More than \$3,000 in cash & prizes. . Formats: 16mm, Digital Video. Preview on VHS/DVD. Entry Fee: \$10 (under 9 min.); \$20 (10-29 min.); \$30 (30-60 min); \$10 additional for Int'l entries . Contact: Ivy Matheny; (707) 826-4113; fax: 826-4112; filmfest@humboldt.edu; www.humboldt.edu/~filmfest.

IOWA CITY INT'L DOC Festival, Apr. 11-15, IA. Deadline: Dec. 1; Jan 16; final Feb 1. A competitive fest showcasing short documentaries. Length of entries is limited to 30 min. Festival seeks short documentaries of 30 min or less. The definition of a "documentary" is open to wide interpretation. Founded: 2002. Cats: doc, short. Awards: Cash prizes. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, video. Preview on VHS. Entry Fee: \$25; \$30 (final). Contact: T.Seeberger; (319) 335-3258; info@ICDocs.org; www.icdocs.org.

LOS ANGELES FILM FESTIVAL, June 16-26, CA. Deadline: Jan. 14; Feb. 18 (final: shorts, music video); March 1 (final: features). Fest showcases the best of American & int'l independent cinema. The fest screens over 80 features & 60 shorts. Fest is widely recognized as a world-class event, uniting emerging filmmakers w/ critics, scholars, film masters, & the movie-loving public. Founded: 1995. Cats: Feature, Doc, Short, Animation, Music Video, Student. Awards: Narrative Competition receives a \$50,000 cash grant, Doc Competition winner receives a \$25,000 cash grant, both funded by Target Stores. Formats: 16mm, 35mm, DigiBeta, HD. Preview on VHS or DVD. Entry Fee: \$50/\$65 (features); \$35/\$45 (shorts); \$20/\$30 (music videos). Contact: Varky James; (310) 432-1208; lafilmfest@ifp.org; www.lafilmfest.com.

MAGNOLIA INDEPENDENT FILM FESTIVAL, Feb. 16-18, MS. Deadline: Jan. 1. Fest keeps the independent spirit of cinema alive & well & moving forward in Mississippi. The first film fest in the state, the fest goes out of its way to present the best of independent films of all lengths & genres, also to treat participating filmmakers to a fabulous time. Founded: 1997. Cats: Feature, Short, Doc, youth media, experimental, animation. Awards: Cash prizes and more. Formats: 35mm, video, Beta, 1/2", DVD. Preview on VHS. Entry Fee: \$20 features; \$15 shorts; \$10 student. Contact: Ron Tibbett, Fest Dir. ; (662) 494-5836; fax: 494-9900; ron@magfilmfest.com; www.magfilmfest.com.

MEDIA THAT MATTERS FILM FESTIVAL, Ongoing, NY. Deadline: Jan. 6. A celebration of short films about social, political or environmental work, this yr. long fest incl. community screenings around the country, online streaming, television broadcasts & DVD distribution to thousands of educators & activists. Seeking films on Food Politics, Criminal Justice, Elections, LGBT Rights, Human Rights, HIV/AIDS & more. Cats: any style or genre, short, doc, experimental, animation, music video, youth media, PSA, Interactive Online Project. Awards: Sixteen winners get an int'l distribution deal- DVD, broadcast, web streaming & hundreds of community screenings. Plus many films get cash awards. Formats: DVD, DigiBeta, Beta SP. 8 min preview. Entry Fee: \$20, Students no fee. Contact: Wendy Cohen; (646)230-6288; fax: 230-6328; wendy@artsengine.net; www.MediaThatMattersFest.org.


METHOD FEST INDEPENDENT FILM FESTIVAL, March 31-April 7, CA. Deadline: Dec. 5; Jan 26 (final). Named for the 'Stanislavski Method,' fest highlights the great performances of independent film. Seeking story driven films w/ outstanding acting performances. Founded: 1999. Cats: Feature, Short, student. Awards: Sculpted statuettes in various cats. Formats: 35mm, Beta SP, DV, DigiBeta, DVD. Preview on VHS. Entry Fee: Student: \$25; Shorts: \$30, \$40 (final); Features: \$40 , \$50 (final). Contact: c/o Franken Enterprises; (310) 535-9230; fax: 535-9128; Don@methodfest.com; www.methodfest.com.

MIAMI GAY & LESBIAN FILM FESTIVAL, April 22-May 1, FL. Deadline: Dec. 14; Jan. 14 (late). Annual fest is seeks work of all genres, lengths & formats incl. dramatic, doc & experimental works, by, about and/or of interest to lesbian, gay, bisexual & transgendered communities. Works must be Miami premieres; awards given in numerous cats. Cats: feature, doc, short. Awards: \$500-1500. Formats: 16mm, 35mm. Preview on VHS. Entry Fee: \$25; \$35 (late). Contact: Philip Matthews, Festival Director; (305) 534-9924; fax: 535-2377; ccoombes@miamigaylesbianfilm.com; mglff.com.


NEWFEST: NEW YORK LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL, & TRANSGENDER GAY FILM Festival, June 1-11, NY. Deadline: Dec. 23; Feb. 20 (final). This fest is committed to presenting diverse & culturally inclusive programs, & showcases all genres of film & video in the interest of lesbians, gay men, bisexuals, or transgendered persons. Founded: 1989. Cats: feature, doc, experimental, short . Awards: Jury awards; Audience Awards. Formats: 35mm, Beta SP, DVD, DigiBeta. Preview on VHS or DVD. Entry Fee: \$20; \$25 (final). Contact: Basil Tsiokos; (212) 571-2170; fax: 571-2179; info@newfest.org; www.newfest.org.

PORTLAND DOC & EXPERIMENTAL FILM FESTIVAL, April 26-30, OR. Deadline: Dec. 16, Jan. 20 (final). PDX is a five-day exposition dedicated to showcasing new innovative film & video. Focusing on non-narrative works "going against the grain of mainstream entertainment," the PDX Film Festival is looking for "artistic, underground, quirky & challenging work that reflects contemporary culture, documents historic oddities, & is otherwise unclassifiable." Cats: doc, short, experimental, underground. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, Beta SP, DV. Preview on VHS or DVD. Entry Fee: \$15. Contact: Peripheral Produce/PDX Film Fest; pdxfilmfest@peripheralproduce.com; www.peripheralproduce.com.

ROSEBUD FILM & VIDEO FESTIVAL, April 8-9, DC. Deadline: Jan. 23. Founded in 1990, the competition is open exclusively to DC, Maryland & Virginia film & video artists. Fest seeks to honor the innovative, experimental, unusual & deeply personal in creative film/video making. The competition is



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open to all works released in previous year. Founded: 1990. Cats: any style or genre. Awards: Winners each receive a \$1,000 cash prize, plus additional products & services. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, Beta SP. Preview on VHS. Entry Fee: \$25 (Entry fee incl. a one-yr. membership to Arlington Community Television, the sponsoring organization). Contact: Jackie Steven, Festival Director; (703) 524-2388; fax: 908-9239; jax@arlingtonmedia.org; www.rosebudact.org.

SAN FRANCISCO INT'L LGBT FILM FESTIVAL:

Frameline 30, June 15-25, CA. Deadline: Dec. 23; Jan 27 (final). Fest one of the oldest & most respected, is committed to screening the best in Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual & Transgender Film. Many works premiered in fest go on to be programmed or distributed nat'lly & int'lly. Rough cuts accepted for preview if submitted on 1/2". Fest produced by Frameline, nonprofit arts organization dedicated to gay & lesbian media arts. Founded: 1976. Cats: any style or genre, feature, doc, short, experimental. Awards: Cash Prizes. Formats: 35mm, 1/2", Beta, 16mm, BETA cam SP- NTSC only. VHS- NTSC/PAL. Entry Fee: \$15-35. Contact: Program Coordinator; (415) 703-8650; fax: 861-1404; info@frameline.org; www.frameline.org.

SEATTLE INT'L FILM FESTIVAL,

May 25-June 18, WA. Deadline: Dec. 1; Jan. 1; Feb. 1 (final). SIFF is the largest film fest in the US, presenting more than 200 features & 80 short films to an audience of over 150,000 filmgoers each year. Fest is one of five N. American film fests in which presentation will qualify a film w/out distribution for submission to the Independent Spirit awards. Founded: 1976. Cats: feature, doc, short, animation. Awards: \$22,500 in cash prizes. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, Beta, Beta SP, DigiBeta. Preview on VHS or DVD. Entry Fee: \$35-\$90. Contact: SIFF; (206) 264-7919; fax: 264-7919; entries@seattlefilm.org; www.seattlefilm.org.

SET IN PHILADELPHIA SCREENWRITING COMPETITION,

March 30-Apr. 12, PA. Deadline: Dec. 5, Jan. 12 (final). The competition is open to all screenwriters who submit an original feature length screenplay set primarily in the Greater Philadelphia

Metropolitan Area. All genres will be accepted. Scripts will be judged on their overall quality, & the extent to which they tell a genuine "Philadelphia story." Cats: script. Awards: Grand Prize-\$10,000 cash prize; Greater Philadelphia Chamber of Commerce Regional Award- \$2,500 cash prize; Parisi Winner: \$1,000 cash prize & more. Entry Fee: \$45, Dec. 5; \$65, final. Contact: c/o the Greater Philadelphia Film Office; SIP@film.org; www.film.org/film makers/sip.php.

STANDING ROCK SHORT FILM FESTIVAL,

Jan. 28, OH. Deadline: Dec. 14, Dec. 31 (final). Fest is open to all filmmakers & videographers worldwide w/ original work. Seeking works 20 min. or less in length. Traditional approaches as well as experimental or unconventional entries are welcome. Cats: short, any style or genre. Formats: DVD, 16mm, Hi8, Super 8, 1/2". Entry Fee: \$10 (Ohio Residents); \$15 (Outside Ohio). Contact: Jeff Ingram; (330) 673-4970; info@standingrock.net; www.standingrock.net.

SYRACUSE INT'L FILM & VIDEO FESTIVAL,

April 6-9, NY. Deadline: Dec. 10. The fest showcases "film & video artists of all ages & countries. Special sidebar cats: Young Filmmakers (ages 10-18) & Central New York Film & Video Artists. "All entries are blind-screened; decisions based on quality of work. Reviews of selected films & videos will be published in a post-fest publication. Founded: 2003. Cats: feature, short, doc, animation, experimental, youth media. Awards: Cash prizes; Sponsor awards. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, Mini-DV (NTSC & PAL), DV-Cam (NTSC & PAL), Beta (NTSC & PAL). Preview on VHS. Entry Fee: \$0-\$85. Contact: c/o Point of Contact Productions; (315) 443-2247; fax: 443-5376; cfawcett@syrilmfest.com; www.syrilmfest.com.

TRENTON FILM FESTIVAL,

May 5-7, NJ. Deadline: Feb. 1. Located one hour south of NYC, 30 min. north of Philadelphia & 8 miles from Princeton, Trenton is a great showcase for independent & foreign filmmakers. The three-day fest screens over sixty films at four venues & has the New Jersey State Museum as its main theatre. Cats: feature, doc, short, animation, experimental. Awards:

Ernie Kovacs award in each category. Formats: Beta, Mini-DV, DVD. preview on VHS or DVD. Entry Fee: \$35/\$45 (features); \$25/\$35 (shorts). Contact: Kevin Williams; (609) 396-6966; fax: 392-3634; info@trentonfilmfestival.org; www.trentonfilmfestival.org.

TRIBECA FILM FESTIVAL, April 25- May 7, NY. Deadline: Dec. 9 (final, shorts); Dec. 16 (final, features). Fest was founded to celebrate NYC as a major filmmaking center & to contribute to the long-term recovery of lower Manhattan. Cats: feature, doc, short, animation, experimental, student. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, HD Cam. Preview on VHS, DVD. Contact: Festival; (212) 941-2304; entries@tribecafilmfestival.org; www.tribecafilmfestival.org.

UNITED STATES SUPER 8MM Film & Digital Video Festival, Feb. 17-19, NJ. Deadline: Jan. 20. Annual fest encourages any genre, but work must have predominantly originated on Super 8 film or hi-8 or digital video. Rutgers Film Co-op/NJMAC has sponsored seven touring programs, culled from fest winners for the past several years, which have travelled extensively & seen new audiences. Cats: any style or genre. Awards: \$4,000 in cash & prizes; selected winners go on Best of Fest Int'l Tour. Formats: Hi8, super 8, 16mm, 1/2", 3/4", DV, 8mm. Preview on VHS. Entry Fee: \$40 (check or money order payable to Rutgers Film Co-op/NJMAC). Contact: A.G. Nigrin; (732) 932-8482; fax: 932-1935; njmac@aol.com; www.njfilmfest.com.

WISCONSIN FILM FESTIVAL, March 30-April 2, WI. Deadline: Dec. 2, Dec. 16 (late). Presented by the University of Wisconsin - Madison Arts Institute. The fest features talks, panels, filmmaker discussions & showcases the work of Wisconsin filmmakers. Cats: feature, doc, short, student. Formats: 16mm, S-VHS, 3/4", 1/2", Beta SP, DigiBeta, DVD, Mini-DV. VHS or DVD. Entry Fee: short: \$17, \$25(late); feature: \$27, \$35(late). Contact: University of Wisconsin-Madison Arts Institute; 1-877-963-FILM; info@wifilmfest.org; www.wifilmfest.org.

INTERNATIONAL

BANGKOK INT'L FILM FESTIVAL, Feb. 17-27,

Thailand. Deadline: Dec. 10. Premiere discovery film fest of Asia accepts int'l shorts, features & docs. Fest will host opening & closing galas, panel discussions & underground film program. Cats: feature, short, doc, animation. Awards: Jury awards. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, video, Beta, DigiBeta. Preview on VHS (NTSC / PAL). Entry Fee: \$40; \$65 (final). Contact: Jennifer Stark; (323) 655-8550; fax: 866-3360; info@bangkokfilm.org; www.bangkokfilm.org.

GOEAST FESTIVAL OF CENTRAL & EASTERN EUROPEAN FILM, April 6-12, Germany. Deadline: Dec. 31. This Festival aims at increasing the German audience's awareness for film-cultural developments in Central & Eastern Europe. Cats: feature, doc. Awards: Cash awards. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, DV, Beta SP. Preview on VHS. Entry Fee: None. Contact: DIF; (011) 49 69 9612 2027; fax: 6637 2947; info@filmfestival-goEast.de; www.filmfestival-goEast.de.

HONG KONG INT'L FILM FESTIVAL, April 4-19, China. Deadline: Dec. 16; Jan. 13 (final). Fest regularly incl. a selection of Int'l, Asian, & Hong Kong Cinema Retrospectives among 300 films & videos screened at various venues. The program incl. the following sections: Asian DV Competition; Humanitarian Awards for Docs; Global Vision; Indie Power; & Reality Bites. The fest has been recognized as a valuable showcase for Asian works that allows the West to discover the riches of Chinese cinema. Cats: feature, doc, short, animation. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, Beta SP. Entry Fee: \$20-\$50. Contact: HKIFF; 011 852 2970 3300; fax: 2970 3011; info@hkiff.org.hk; www.hkiff.org.hk.

HOT DOCS CANADIAN INT'L DOC FILM FESTIVAL, April 28- May 7, Ontario. Deadline: Dec. 12 Jan. 13 (final). Hot Docs is North America's largest documentary fest. Each year, the fest presents "a selection of over 100 cutting-edge documentaries" from Canada & around the globe. Through its industry programmes, the fest also provides a full range of professional development, market, & networking opportunities for documentary professionals. Cats: Doc. Awards: Various awards

given. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, Beta SP (NTSC or PAL), DigiBeta (NTSC or PAL), High Definition. Preview on VHS. Entry Fee: Int'l entry fee: U.S. \$35; Final/Jan. fee: U.S. \$100. Contact: Hot Docs; (416)203-2155; fax: 203-0446; info@hotdocs.ca; www.hotdocs.ca.

INSIDE OUT: TORONTO LESBIAN & GAY FILM & VIDEO FESTIVAL, May 18-28, Canada. Deadline: Jan. 16. Fest hosts the largest lesbian & gay fest in Canada & one of the largest in the world. Previous years fests screened 300 plus films & videos in 84 programs w/ sold out screenings. Fest has assisted in securing theatrical & broadcast distribution for several films & videos through relationships w/ Canadian film & TV entities. Fest is not only a highly anticipated cultural event renowned for its hospitality & integrity in programming, but an excellent opportunity to network w/ other independent film & video makers & interested industry representatives. Founded: 1991. Cats: feature, doc, short, animation, experimental, music video, student, youth media, family, children, TV. Awards: Awards are given for both local & int'l work. The Bulloch Award for Best Canadian Work, the Akau Award for Best Lesbian Short, the Cruiseline Award for Best gay Male Short, & the Charles St. Video Award for Best Emerging Toronto Artist. Audience Awards incl. the Showcase Award for Best Feature, the Ellen Flanders Award for Best Doc & the Mikey Award for Best Short. In all, more than \$5,000 in cash & prizes is awarded annually. Formats: 16mm, Beta, 35mm. Preview on VHS. Entry Fee: None. Contact: Kathleen Mullen; (416) 977-6847; fax: 977-8025; inside@insideout.on.ca; www.insideout.on.ca.

INT'L FEATURE FILM COMPETITION FOR WOMEN FILM DIRECTORS, TBA, Germany. Deadline: TBA. Festival organizes every 2 years as an int'l film fest centered on one topical theme which also incl. historical aspects. They highlights those films that came into being largely as a result of women's efforts director, screenwriter, sound technician, camera operator or editor. The fest is a non-competitive framework. Founded: 1987. Cats: Any style or genre, feature, doc, short. Awards: Grand

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www.sxsw.com/film



prize 25,000 Euro. Formats: All formats accepted, 35mm, 16mm, S-VHS, Beta, Beta SP, DigiBeta, U-matic. Preview on VHS. Entry Fee: 25 Euro. Contact: femme totale e.V., c/o Kulturburo Stadt Dortmund, ; 011 49 231 50 25 162; fax: 011 49 231 50 25 734; info@femmetotale.de; www.femmetotale.de.

INT'L FILM FESTIVAL OF URUGUAY, April 1-16, Uruguay. Deadline: Jan. 20. Annual fest devoted to short & feature length, doc, fiction, experimental, Latin American & int'l films, w/ purpose of promoting film quality & human & conceptual values. Ind. fest aims at being frame for meetings & discussions of regional projects & of mutual interest. Fest has 4 sections: Int'l Full Length Film Show; Int'l Doc & Experimental Film Show; Info Show; Espacio Uruguay. Films should be subtitled, have Spanish version, or have a list of texts or dialogues translated into Spanish or in English, French or Portuguese for fest to translate. Films wishing to compete must be completed after Jan. 1 of the past two years. Founded: 1982. Cats: feature, doc, short, experimental, animation, student. Awards: Best Film; Jury Prize; Opera Prima Prize. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, Beta SP, DVD, DV. Preview on VHS. Entry Fee: None. Contact: Manuel Martinez Carril; 011 5982 418 9819; fax: 5982 419 4572; cinemuy@chasque.net; www.cinematoca.org.uy.

NYON INT'L DOC FESTIVAL, April 18-24, Switzerland. Deadline: Jan. 15. a.k.a Visions du Reel, seeking nonfiction works of all lengths that "through their form & aesthetic qualities provide personal & unusual descriptions & interpretations of past & present realities of the world." Awards: 2000-15,000 Euros. Formats: 16mm, 35mm, Beta SP, VHS or DVD. Contact: Festival; (41) 22 365 4455; fax: (41) 22 365 4450 ; docnyon@visionsdureel.ch; www.visionsdureel.ch.

OBERHAUSEN INT'L SHORT FILM FESTIVAL, TBA, Germany. Deadline: TBA. The world's oldest short film fest offers a forum for aesthetic & technological innovation &

reflection. There are no limits as to form or genre but films in the Int'l & Children's & Youth Competitions must not exceed 35 min. & have been made after Jan. 1 of the previous year. All submitted works are viewed by an independent selection committee appointed by the fest & will be in the market catalogue unless stated otherwise. Approx. 70 titles will be selected by the Int'l Competition & 40 in the Children & Youth Competition. Founded: 1954. Cats: Short, Any style or genre, Children, Music Video. Awards: incl. Grand Prize, Jury of Int'l Film Critics award. Works will compete for prizes worth a total of 37,500 EURO (approx. \$46,000). Formats: 35mm, 16mm, Beta SP/PAL, DV, S-VHS, Super 8, DVD. Preview on VHS or S-VHS. Entry Fee: None. Contact: Melanie Piguel, Coordinator; 011 49 208 825 2652; fax: 49 208 825 5413; info@kurzfilmtage.de; www.kurzfilmtage.de.

OPORTO INT'L FILM FESTIVAL/FANTASPORTO, Feb.24-Mar.4, Portugal. Deadline: Dec. 15. Noncompetitive fest debuted in 1981, founded by editors of film magazine Cinema Novo & has evolved into a competitive fest for features that focus on mystery, fantasy & sci-fi. Official Section, competition for fantasy films; Directors' Week, competition for 1st & 2nd films (no thematic strings); Out of Competition for Films of the World, info section & retro section. Festival runs in 4 theaters w/ 2,000 seats altogether & screens nearly 250 features & shorts. Press coverage extensive from major newspapers, radio stations & TV networks. Entries must have been completed in previous 2 years. Cats: animation, short, feature. Awards: incl. Best Film, Best Direction, Best Actor/Actress, Best Screenplay, Best Special Effects, Best Short Film, Special Award of the Jury. Formats: 35mm. Preview on VHS (NTSC or PAL). Entry Fee: No entry fee. Contact: Mario Dorminsky, Director; 011 351 222 076 050; fax: 351 222 076 059; info@fantasporto.online.pt; www.fantasporto.online.pt.

ROME INDEPENDENT FILM FESTIVAL, March 24-31, Italy. Deadline: Dec. 15. This

Festival is a non-profit cultural organization whose mission is to promote & increase the visibility of Italian & int'l cinema, which is often out of public reach. Cats: script, short, feature, doc, student. Awards: Airline tickets, cash, film, film development & post production assistance. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, DVD, VHS. Preview on VHS or DV. Entry Fee: \$12 (student), \$42 (screenplay, shorts, & docs), \$60 (Features). Contact: Fabrizio Ferrari; (011)39 06 4542 5050; fax: 2331 9206; info@riff.it; www.riff.it.

SINGAPORE INT'L FILM FESTIVAL, April 13-29, Singapore. Deadline: Jan. 15. Invitational fest offers non-competitive & competitive section for Asian cinema, w/ award for best Asian feature. Open to features completed after Jan. 1 of preceding yr. Entries must be Singapore premieres. About 120 features shown each yr, along w/ 60 shorts & videos from 60 countries. Main section shows 35mm; all other formats accepted in fringe programs. Several US indie films have been featured in past editions. Cats: Short, Feature, Doc, Animation. Formats: 35mm, 16mm, Beta SP (PAL), DigiBeta, VHS or DVD. Entry Fee: None. Contact: Philip Cheah, Festival Director; 011 65 738 7567; fax: 011 65 738 7578; filmfest@pacific.net.sg; www.filmfest.org.sg.

TURIN INT'L GAY & LESBIAN FILM FESTIVAL, April 20-27, Italy. Deadline: Jan. 31. Italy's oldest gay & lesbian fest. Entries should be by lesbian/gay/bisexual/transgender filmmakers or address related themes & issues. Competition section divided between 3 juries: doc, long feature & short feature. Founded: 1986. Cats: doc, feature, short. Awards: Ottavio Mai Award presented to Best Feature in competition worth \$1500.. Formats: 1/2", 35mm, 16mm, Beta SP, DVD, DV. Preview on VHS. Entry Fee: None. Contact: Giovanni Minerba, Director; Cosimo Santoro, Head Programmer; 390 11 534 888; fax: 535 796; info@tgiff.com; www.tgiff.com.

CLASSIFIEDS

By Michael Tierno

Deadline: First of each month, two months prior to cover date (e.g., Sept. 1st for Nov. issue). Contact: (212) 807-1400, x241; fax: (212) 463-8519; classifieds@avf.org per issue cost: 0-240 characters (incl. spaces & punctuation) \$.45 for nonmembers/\$.30 for AVF members; 241-360 chars \$.65/\$.45; 361-480 chars \$.80/\$.60; 481-600 chars \$.95/\$.75; over 600 characters: Call for quote. (212) 807-1400, x241. Frequency discount: \$5 off per issue for ads running 5+ times. Ads exceeding the specified length will be edited. Place ad at www.avf.org/independent/classifieds or type copy and mail with the check or money order to AVF, 304 Hudson St., 6th Fl., New York, NY 10013. Include billing address, daytime phone, # of issues, and valid member ID# for member discount. To pay by VISA/MC/AMEX include card #, name on card and expiration date.

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UNION SQUARE AREA STAGE RENTALS, production space, Digibeta, Beta SP, DVCAM, mini-DV, hi-8, 24-P, projectors, grip, lights, dubs, deck and camera rentals. Uncompressed Avid and FCP suites, too. Production Central (212) 631-0435

DISTRIBUTION

FANLIGHT PRODUCTIONS 25 years as an industry leader! Join more than 100 award-winning film & video producers. Send us your new works on healthcare, mental health, aging, disabilities, and

related issues. (800) 937-4113; www.fanlight.com.

NEW DAY FILMS seeks energetic independent film and video makers with social issue docs for distribution to non-theatrical markets. If you want to maximize your audience while working within a remarkable community of activist filmmakers, New Day is the perfect home for your film. New Day is committed to promoting diversity within our membership and the media we represent. Explore our catalog at www.newday.com, then contact Alice Elliott at join@newday.com or 212-924-7151.

THE CINEMA GUILD, leading film/video/multimedia distributor, seeks new doc, fiction, educational & animation programs for distribution. Send videocassettes or discs for evaluation to: The Cinema Guild, 130 Madison Ave., 2nd fl., New York, NY 10016; (212) 685-6242; info@CINEMAGUILD.COM; Ask for our Distribution Services brochure.

THE ARAB RADIO AND TELEVISION

NETWORK, or ART, is planning to introduce a non-Arab language satellite channel in the Middle East. This Film Channel is seeking independent feature films, short films and documentaries for future programming. We want to introduce the Middle

East to films that are not commercial. Go global with us. For submission information please contact Mustafa Tell, Broadcast Director, ART at broadcast@art-tv.jo with a short synopsis of your film.

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ARE YOU STUCK? Fernanda Rossi, script & documentary doctor, specializes in narrative structure in all stages of the filmmaking process, including story development, fundraising trailers and post-production. She has doctored over 30 films and is the author of "Trailer Mechanics." For private consultations and workshops visit www.documentarydoctor.com or write to info@documentarydoctor.com.

BRENDAN C. FLYNT Director of Photography for feature films and shorts. Credits: "Remedy" starring Frank Vincent and "El Rey" (Goya Award). Have 35mm, s16, HD equipment and contacts w/festivals, distributors, and name actors. Call anytime (212) 208-0968 or bcflynt@yahoo.com; www.dpflynt.com

COMPOSER MIRIAM CUTLER loves to collaborate: docs, features. Lost In La Mancha/IFC, Scout's Honor, Licensed To Kill, Pandemic: Facing Aids/HBO, Indian Point/HBO, Positively Naked/HBO, Stolen Childhoods, Amy's O & more. (310) 398-5985 mir.cut@verizon.net. www.miriamcutler.com.

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FREELANCE CAMERA GROUP IN NYC seeking professional cameramen and soundmen w/ solid Betacam experience to work w/ wide array of clients. If qualified, contact COA at (212) 505-1911. Must have documentary/ news samples or reel.

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STORYBOARDS make complicated scenes clear. Kathryn Roake has drawn over 15 films and is the winner of a New Line Cinema grant, another, the winner of an HBO grant. I work on union and non union films. Kathryn 718-788-2755.

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50 WAYS TO IMPROVE YOUR VIDEO BUSINESS. FREE REPORT. Grow a successful video business in Legal, Wedding, Corporate, TV and more. <http://videouniversity.com/50web.htm>

CAREER AND SCRIPT CONSULTANT Emmy nominated Ellen Sandler (Co-Executive Producer "Everybody Loves Raymond")

can help anyone avoid costly, time consuming pitfalls and deadends in the Hollywood game. She works one on one with you on pitching skills, script re-writes, career strategies, including networking and relocating to Los Angeles. Her approach follows specific guidelines and proven techniques, but is always customized to the specific needs, strengths and budget of each client. Email: elsand@comcast.net for more information and to request a sample consultation at no charge.

ECHOTROPE, OMAHA NE, works collaboratively with other art venues such as the Bemis Center for Contemporary Arts and UNO Art Gallery to organize exhibitions/screenings. Seeking submissions for the 2006 - 2007. Deadline 2/1/05 for CE06/ CE07. Accept MiniDV, DVD. Please include current CV, support materials, contact info, SASE FOR RETURN: Echotrope P.O. Box 31394 Omaha NE, 68181-0394. www.echotrope.org.

FILMMAKING INSTRUCTOR NEEDED Concord Academy is a coeducational independent boarding and day school of 340 students grades 9-12. It offers a rigorous liberal arts curriculum in which the arts play an important role. Members of the Visual Arts department are working artists who maintain their own studios and exhibit their work. The Visual Arts Department is looking for a 60-80% time filmmaking instructor. Candidates are expected to teach three levels of filmmaking which includes film (Super 8 and 16mm), video and digital video production and post-production. Other courses could include Screenwriting, Film History and New Media Production. Experience with Final Cut Pro, Avid DV express pro and other graphic software helpful. Production experience and knowledge of film history and criticism essential. Teaching experience and MFA preferred. Instructor supervises a well-equipped facility with the help of a tech assistant. Duties beyond the classroom include advising students and serving on committees. To apply send resume, teaching philosophy and three references to: Cynthia Katz, Chair, Visual Arts

Department Concord Academy, 166 Main Street Concord, MA 01742 Review of applications to begin November 1. Position open until filled. Finalists will be asked to submit a sample reel. No telephone calls please. For questions, email cynthia_katz@concordacademy.org. Concord Academy actively seeks applicants who reflect and support our mission-driven commitment to creating and maintaining a diverse and inclusive school community.

PREPRODUCTION | DEVELOPMENT

GET YOUR SCREENPLAY READY FOR PRODUCTION! Former Miramax story analyst, School of Visual Arts professor and author of Aristotle's Poetics for Screenwriters (Hyperion, August 2002), will analyze your screenplay and write you constructive in-depth studio style notes. I will go right to the heart of what works in your script and what needs improvement as well as offering suggestions about HOW to fix it. Trust me, I'm not looking for "formulas." Every screenplay is different. Since I'm an independent filmmaker, I specialize in helping filmmakers get their scripts ready for shooting. Face it. You're going to spend a lot of money to make your film. Spend a little up front to make sure your script works. It's the ONLY way to pull off a low budget film effectively! It will cost you 1000 times more to fix script problems AFTER the production begins. Reasonable rates, references. Michael Tierno, mtier no@nyc.rr.com.

POSTPRODUCTION

AUDIO POST-PRODUCTION. Audio completion on your Doc or Film. Well Credited and experienced. Visit website for Credit List. Terra Vista Media, Inc. Tel 562-437-0393.

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WEB SITE DESIGNER: Create multimedia web sites, integrating video, sound, and special effects, that promote your films and/or your company. www.sabineprobst-design.com. Info: Sabine Probst, phone: 646-226-7881, email: sabine@promo.net.

INDIEVILLE: With more than 26,000 unique visitors per month and 5,200 email newsletter subscribers join the indie crusade at <http://indieville.net>.

NOTICES

By Erica Berenstein

Noncommercial notices are listed free of charge as space permits. *The Independent* reserves the right to edit for length and makes no guarantees about duration of listing. Limit submissions to 60 words and indicate how long your information will be current. Listings must be submitted to notices@avf.org by the first of the month two months prior to cover date (e.g., Sept. 1 for Nov. issue). Remember to give us complete contact info (name, address, and phone number). Listings do not constitute an endorsement by *The Independent* or AVF. We try to be as current and accurate as possible, but nevertheless double-check details before sending anyone anything.

COMPETITIONS

SHORT FILM SLAM, NYC's only weekly short film competition, is looking for submissions. Competition on Sundays at 2 p.m. At the end of each show the audience votes for a winning film, which receives further screenings at the Pioneer Theater. To enter, you must have a film, 30 min. or less, in a 35mm, 16mm, BetaSP, VHS, or DVD format. To submit your film, stop by the Pioneer Theater (155 E. 3rd St.) during operating hours, call (212) 254-7107, or visit www.twoboots.com/pioneer for more information.

APPLAUSE SCREENWRITING COMPETITION

calling for original works of an author or authors and not previously optioned, purchased, or produced. Adaptations (no documentaries) are welcome provided the author assumes sole legal responsibility for obtaining copyrights to the adapted work. Prizes: Script submission to agents, managers, producers, lunch with Hollywood execs, exposure and promotion packages, coverage, script critiques, software, magazines, and other great product prizes. www.applause4you.com

DRAMA GARAGE seeks completed and orig-

inal feature-length screenplays that do not exceed 120 pages and have limited camera angles. If chosen, you'll receive a fully produced, staged reading of your screenplay in Hollywood, referrals, contacts, and much more. Please visit www.dramagarage.com or call 323-993-5700 for more information.

CONFERENCES / WORKSHOPS

VOLUNTEER LAWYERS FOR THE ARTS: offer seminars on "Copyright Basics," "Nonprofit Incorporation & Tax Exemption" & more. Reservations must be made. Contact: (212) 319-2910 x. 9.

PUBLICATIONS

DATABASE & DIRECTORY OF LATIN AMERICAN FILM & VIDEO, organized by Int'l Media Resources Exchange, seeks works by Latin American & US Latino ind. producers. To send work or for info, contact Roselly Torres, LAVA, 124 Washington Pl., NY, NY 10014; (212) 463-0108; imre@igc.org.

FELIX is a journal of media arts & communication. The next issue will be edited by Kathy High w/ guest editors Ximena Cuevas, Roberto Lopez & Jesse Lerner. Entitled RISK/RIESGO, it will be the maga-

zine's first bilingual issue (in Spanish & English) & will ask: What makes work/life/art risky business? What is the gamble? Where is the dare, the hazard, the danger? Felix is published by the Standby Program, Inc. Order by phone: (212) 219-0951; www.e-felix.org.

DEEP FOCUS: A REPORT ON THE FUTURE OF INDEPENDENT MEDIA.

What are the contours of this decade's emerging media landscape? How can makers, funders and organizations adapt to opportunities and challenges distinctive to this new environment? In this far-reaching new report six leading independent media organizations partner with Global Business Network to take a bold, provocative look at the future. Free to members and available for purchase at www.namac.org.

RESOURCES / FUNDS

THE FUND FOR WOMEN ARTISTS IS A non-profit organization dedicated to helping women get the resources they need to do their creative work. We focus on women using their art to address social issues, especially women in theatre, film, and video, and we have two primary goals: To Challenge Stereotypes and we support the

creation of art that reflects the full diversity and complexity of women's lives. To Increase Opportunities -We advocate for women artists to be paid fairly and to have more opportunities to make a living from their creative work. To learn more about our work, and to sign up to receive these funding newsletters, visit our web page at: www.WomenArts.org.

THE LEEWAY FOUNDATION, which supports individual women artists, arts programs, and arts organizations in the Greater Philadelphia region, has announced the Art and Change Grants provide immediate, short-term grants of up to \$2,500 to women artists in the Philadelphia region who need financial assistance to take advantage of opportunities for art and change. The artist's opportunity for change must be supported by or be in collaboration with a Change Partner — a person, organization, or business that is providing the opportunity or is a part of the opportunity in some way. Eligible Change Partners include mentors, editors, galleries, community art spaces, theaters, nonprofit organizations, film studios, and clubs. (Art and Change Grant Deadlines: April 11, June 20, and October 31, 2005.) Visit the Leeway Foundation Web site for grantmaking guide lines and application forms.

THE PACIFIC PIONEER FUND supports emerging documentary filmmakers—Limited to organizations anywhere in the US, certified by the IRS as "public charities", which undertake to supervise any project for which individuals receive funds, and to control the selection of individual recipients of funds. The fund does not provide support for endowments, building campaigns, accumulated deficits, or ordinary operating budgets, or make grants to individuals. The fund does not support instructional or performance documentaries or student film projects. Grants are limited to filmmakers or videographers who live and work in California, Oregon and Washington. Approximately \$1,100,000. Applications are accepted on an ongoing basis. Application deadlines in 2005-06 are 1/2/06 and 5/1/06. Print out an application from www.pacificpioneerfund.com and send it, along with a VHS tape of up to 10 minutes of edited footage from the project for which support is sought, to P.O. Box 20504, Stanford, CA 94309. If you have questions, email Armin Rosencranz: armin@stanford.edu. For urgent questions, phone: 650-996-3122.

MICROCINEMAS / SCREENINGS

FILM AND VIDEO 825 - Series of bi-monthly screenings of locally, nationally and internationally recognized film and video artists' work, providing a forum for presenting experimental film and video in Los Angeles. In a city dominated by Hollywood, venues such as ours become a necessity for artists working in time-based media that is outside the mainstream of narrative cinema. Our curatorial vision is open to both shorts and features in experimental, performance, animation, and documentary forms. Film/Video 825, Gallery 825/LAAA, 825 N. La Cienega Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90069, T: (310) 652- 8272, F: (310) 652-9251, gallery825@laaa.org, www.laaa.org/calendar/film_video.html.

BROADCAST / CABLECAST

AXLEGREASE PUBLIC ACCESS CABLE SHOW: Tuesdays at 2:00 PM on Channel 20. Become part of current media making history and submit your media work to be shown on TV, on our legendary public access cable show. Commercial free, 100% media art TV. Provide us with mini-dv, vhs, svhs, or 8mm video (ntsc) tapes with a running time of 28 min. or less. Your work may also be displayed in our storefront window. Your entry will become a part of our Member Viewing Library unless you include an SASE. Axlegrease is open to local and international artists. Send tapes Attention: Axlegrease. Formats accepted: mini-dv, s-vhs, vhs or dvd. Visit www.squeaky.org/opportunities.html#ongoing for more information.

OPEN SCREENINGS Second Wednesday of Every Month 8pm! Free! Squeaky Wheel's long-running free open screening is one of our most popular programs. Filmmakers, video/sound/digital artists, community doc-

umentarians, and students of all ages are welcome to bring short works for insightful critique. The open screening is perfect for newly created works or works in progress. Bring works less than 15 minutes. Call ahead to screen a longer work. We created some new mini-themes (you don't have to make work on the theme, but if it inspires you, go ahead) to get more people in the door! Formats accepted: Super 8, 16mm, video (mini-dv, svhs, vhs), cassettes, cds, Mac compatible cd-rom.

WIRESTREAM is seeking independent films and television series for broadcast. Genre welcome include Drama, Comedy, SciFi, Fantasy, Nonfiction/ Reality and Educational films and series, suitable for general/mature audiences. All entries must be available for all rights worldwide. Entries previously presented are eligible subject to confirmation of rights. Submit entries to Wayne Hicks, Executive Producer, via email to wayne@wirestreamproductions.com, or by Parcel Post to WireStream Productions, 3005B W. Hwy 76, Branson MO 65616.

WEBCAST

FILMFIGHTS.COM democratic filmfestival that anyone can enter, 3 times a month. We filmfight every ten days of the month (the 10th, 20th, and 30th) and submissions are due 1 day before the fight—given a title or genre, the submissions are voted on through the website. Please visit the website for a complete list of guidelines: <http://filmfights.com/submit.shtml>.

KNOWITALLVIDEO created an online video community aimed at world's largest user-generated video collection. With an exhaustive list of categories covering every conceivable subject, any wannabe star or director with a camera can easily upload short-form digital videos for an unlimited audience of Internet and wireless PDA users visit www.knowitallvideo.com.

Work Wanted

Noncommercial notices are listed free of charge as space permits. *The Independent* reserves the right to edit for length and makes no guarantees about duration of listing. Limit submissions to 60 words and indicate how long your information will be current. Listings must be submitted to notices@aivf.org by the first of the month two months prior to cover date (e.g., Sept. 1 for Nov. issue). Remember to give us complete contact info (name, address, and phone number). Listings do not constitute an endorsement by *The Independent* or AIVF. We try to be as current and accurate as possible, but nevertheless: double-check details before sending anyone anything.

By Erica Berenstein

HOLLYWOOD GATEWAY SCREENWRITING CONTEST:

The mission of the Hollywood Gateway Screenwriting Contest is to guide aspiring writers to their success through opportunity, mentoring and unparalleled access to Hollywood decision makers. \$5,000 Cash prize and an initial 12-month option agreement against a potential \$100,000 purchase price, among other prizes. Early Entries February 28th, 2005 - Special Early Bird Entry Cost \$35.00. Contest Deadline April 30th, 2005 - Entry Cost \$40.00 Late Entry June 30th, 2005 - Entry Cost \$50.00. Type of Material: Screenplays 80-140 pages. International entries written in English are welcome. www.hollywoodgateway.com/details.php.

THE DOCUMENTARY CHANNEL IS A NEW DIGITAL

cable channel dedicated to airing, exclusively, the works of the independent documentary filmmaker. There isn't a single type of documentary that they will not show, and they are not afraid of controversy. That said, they prefer the edgier, more personal films that tell a story and that show something in a unique, visual manner. See the website for submission instructions. Submissions accepted on a rolling basis. Please visit <http://documentarychannel.com/index.htm> for more information or email programs@documentarychannel.com.

COMEDY EXPRESS TV seeks funny films under 7 min. to show and promote on television. We will show, onscreen, the credits and contact information for the filmmakers, including your 15,000! Please look at our website www.comedyexpress.tv which gives more background as well as the online release which MUST accompany all submissions. Contact: Adam Gilad 9229 Sunset Blvd LA CA 90069 adamgilad@mac.com 310 271 0023.

MACHINE DREAMS is developing a series of theatrical shows for national audiences that will involve original music, movies, movie shorts, animations, games, graphics and art. We are conducting a global search for the best ORIGINAL independent material in the following categories: Social Commentary & Societal Issues, Humor and Satire, Special Effects, Interactive "No Death" Gaming, Great Media in any form (music, music video, movie, movie shorts, animation, games, graphics, art) We plan to incorporate your work in one or more of the following ways: 1. Include it in a juried show in New York City, with winners receiving recognition and cash prizes and airing on a network television show, 2. Include it in one or more interactive shows in New York City, 3. Include it in distribution across movie theatres, DVD, web, television, cable,

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TIME:BASE is a curated exhibition of time-based media and art at Boley, an 8,000 sq ft. former bank in downtown Kansas City. Emphasis for 2006 May-June show is site-specific work and installation. Video, film, audio, installation, interactive art or performance of any type also considered. Send CD, DVD, VHS, URL or detailed proposal with entry form (www.time-base.org) to: time: base, 5100 Rockhill Rd Haag 202, Kansas City MO 64110. Tel: 816-235-1708; time-base@hotmail.com.

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Cinematographer for Wildlife Production - 60-minute HD documentary on Peru's Humboldt penguin. Shooting 720p/24 on DVCPRO HD. Code TV009

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HD "B" Roll for Stock House - Shooting 1080p/24 or 720p/24 on DVCPRO HD, in-camera editing necessary. Code TV0102

We Buy Your Video Footage - We take your personal videos and sell as stock footage. You make money! Code TV013

SD Reality Adventure - Shoot from 60i to 24p to deliver different looks, be ready for unpredictable weather. Code TV0014

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None of this work would be possible without the generous support of the AIVF membership and the following organizations:

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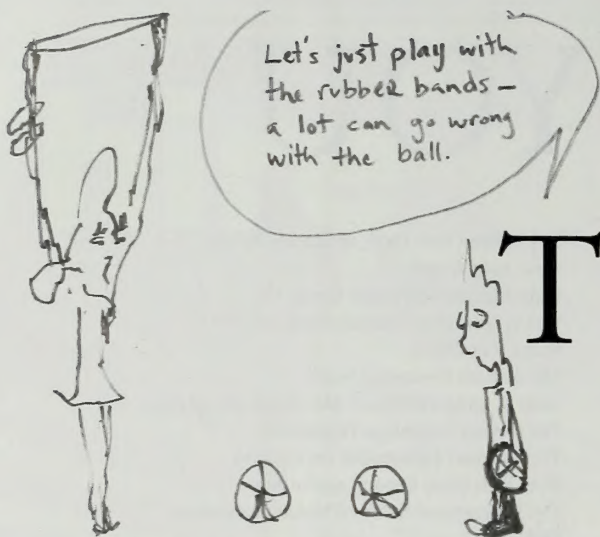
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THE LIST

The Real Deal

By Rebecca Carroll

Television networks continue to develop new and more and more and new reality programming, and docs are getting more and more commercial and self-indulgent. What's the difference between the two? And more importantly, what are the futures of these two genres—will they intersect or cancel each other out or ultimately, distinguish themselves from one another in an ugly high-brow/low-brow battle to the finish? Filmmakers respond.

"I think the pop docs that have become so prevalent are fairly harmless, though it would be wrong to think that they open up opportunities for the genre in general. In fact, though they might open the door a bit to theatrical doc audiences, the result is then that the room is more crowded. So who's gonna book the really well-made, artistically or politically challenging doc when they can book *Mad Hot Spelling Ball* instead? In the end, I think pop docs will stick around but thin out—even the popcorn audience can only watch so many heartwarming films about misfits from bad neighborhoods triumphing over adversity.

"Reality TV has nothing to do with real docs, pop or not. It has more to do with porn, actually, or drug dealing. The only way to stop it is to ignore it. Stop watching, stop talking about it, and film people, please, stop working on it. 'It's a gig and I need the money' is not an excuse. Making snuff films is a gig, too. It's degrading, mind-numbing, and just plain sad. And because of old-fashioned things like theaters, VCRs, books, and actual, human conversation, reality TV is actually pretty easy to ignore. Try it tonight. You'll feel much better in the morning."

—Jim McKay, director, *Angel* (2005)

"So what happens when the tables are turned on a documentary filmmaker? When you suddenly find yourself as a minor league character (aka 'the boss') in a major league reality show world ('The Real World: Austin'). This was my experience. It's hard to be spontaneous when two or three camera crews are maneuvering to get the best angle of every conversation I have. I'm trying to give advice, help the kids make a short film about bands at SXSW, but I'm also wondering how an editor I'll never meet is going to use anything I say. Or any facial tick I might have.

"I may ultimately question what 'truth' is, but then if documentaries—and even some reality shows—are representations of real life, by necessity they're in service of the filmmaker's perspective and interpretation of that reality. But what I really think about

is the one thing I probably share with everyone else who has ever seen themselves on screen. Every time I appear, I worry about how I look."

—Paul Stekler, filmmaker, *George Wallace: Settin' the Woods on Fire* (2000), Radio-TV-Film Dept., University of Texas at Austin

"I just edited the trailer for a reality TV pilot about a documentary filmmaker. This pilot was shopped around as a hybrid. Part reality, partly scripted, and each episode would contain a character portrait in documentary style. What is the future of these two forms of expression, documentary film and reality TV? The future of television is multi-vision—many eyes on many things all the time. Homeless TV is another way to look at it, disassociated from time and place."

—Fritz Donnelly, filmmaker, *To the Hills* (2002)

"First, I think there are two types of reality programs: One being the 'race 'em' type shows, the lowest of the low in any type of programming, reality or not (who's the ugliest swan or shiniest apprentice and my personal favorite, the toppest of all the models in the land!); all of which are today's version of the '70s game show. The other being one that follows a character or a group of characters in a (semi) realistic situation, be it a mechanic shop, an airline, etc. and which holds a lot of similarities to so called 'high-brow' docs.

"Both forms have intersected for a long time it's just that now there are more hour-long docs on TV, where as 10 years ago there used to be none. I have never felt that 'high brow' docs (*March of the Penguins*, *Born Into Brothels*) were any less manipulative than an episode of "Miami Ink"—they are both telling a story and, in order to do that, are manipulating the truth to serve the story. Feels more like the distinction between the two comes down to which one gets to screen at Sundance and have a theatrical run, while the other will air every Tuesday at 9 on the Discovery Channel."

—Bo Mehrad, writer/director, *Thirsty*, Ugly Betty Productions

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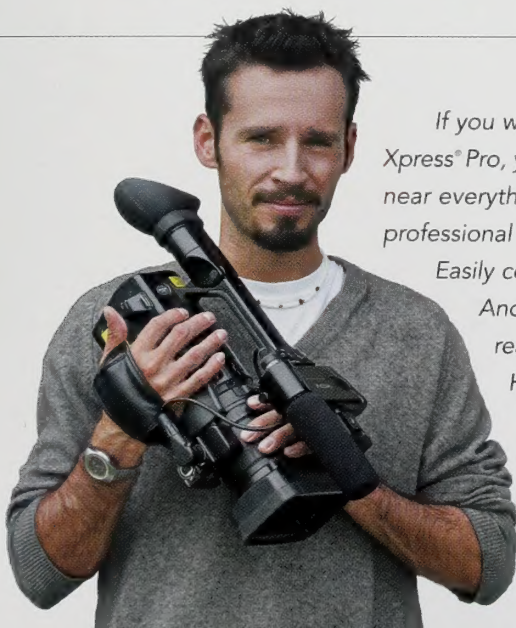
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